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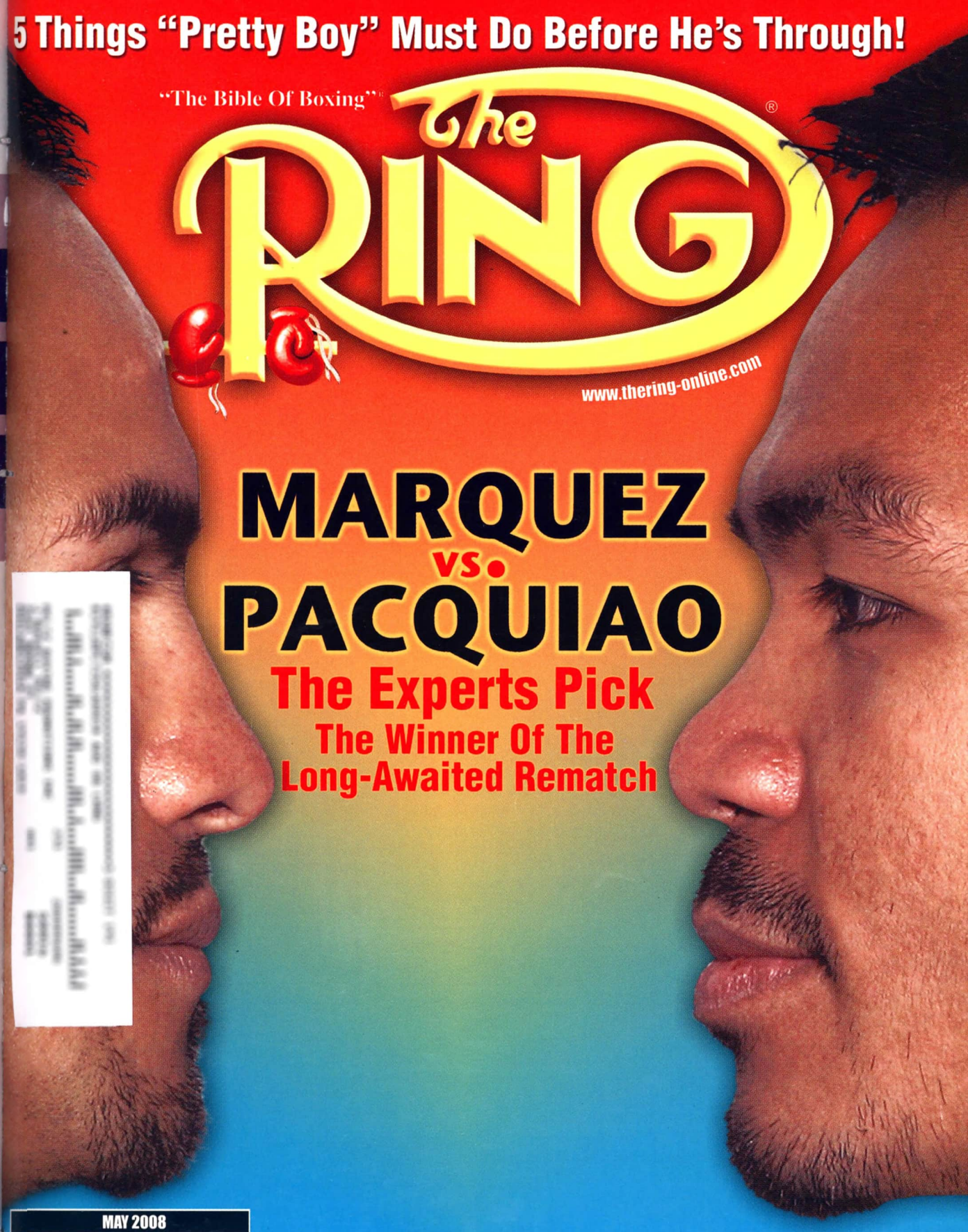

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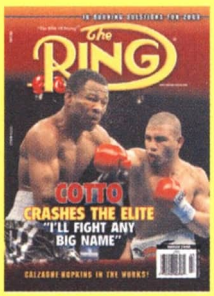

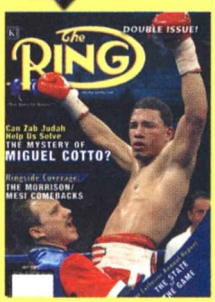

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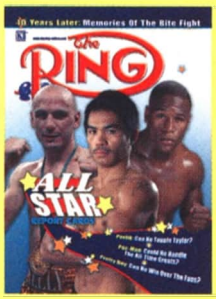

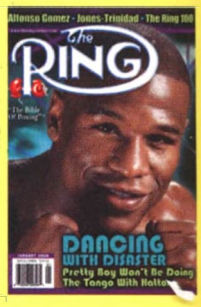

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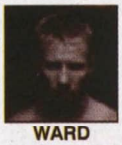

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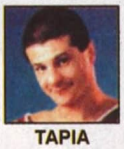

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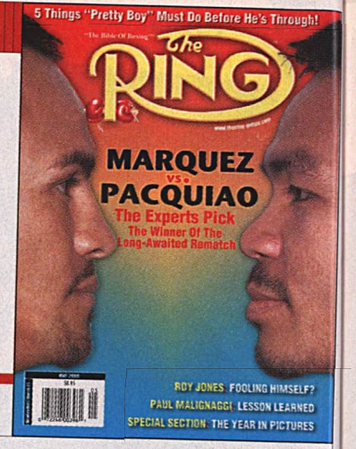
Don't Touch That Plunger!

This is a cute setup shot to promote what is expected to be an explosive world cruiserweight championship fight between Enzo Maccarinelli and David Haye on March 8 in London. Hopefully, though, this is only a prop because if the fighters push that handle down, those hardhats aren't going to protect them from the dynamite at their feet!

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Contents



May 2008

Cover Photos: Juan Manuel Marquez, Manny Pacquiao
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Features

30 Legacy In The Balance
Five Things Mayweather Must Do Before He's Through
By William Dettloff

38 Marquez-Pacquiao II
The Experts Pick The Winner
Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

42 The Surviving Titan
Jones Gets By Trinidad, But Is He Merely Fooling Himself?
By Don Stradley

50 Malignaggi Learns A Lesson
The Magic Man Should Have No Illusions About His Power
By Don Stewart

56 The Ring Update: 1960s Middleweight Joe DeNucci
"I'm Only Here Because I'm Not All There"
By Don Stradley

63 The Year In Pictures
A Look Back At The Best Boxing Photos Of 2007

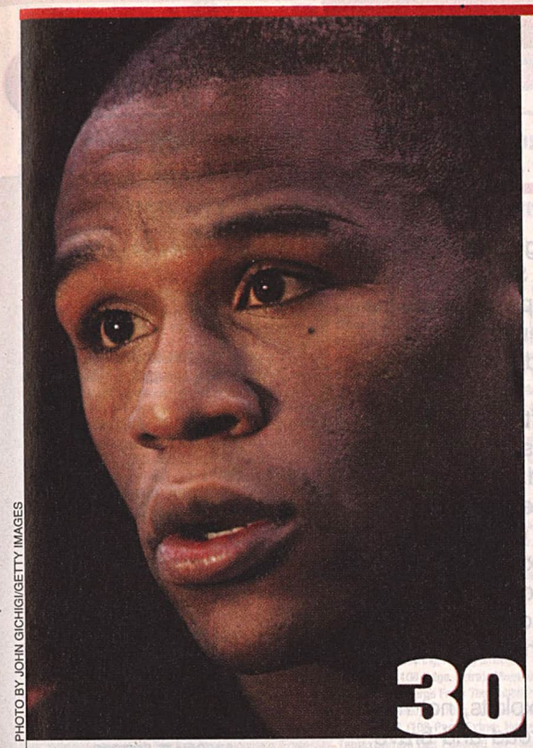
Ringside Reports

112 Fighter Of The Month & Ringside Reports

Ratings

15 Ratings Analysis

16 The Ring's International Ratings & Records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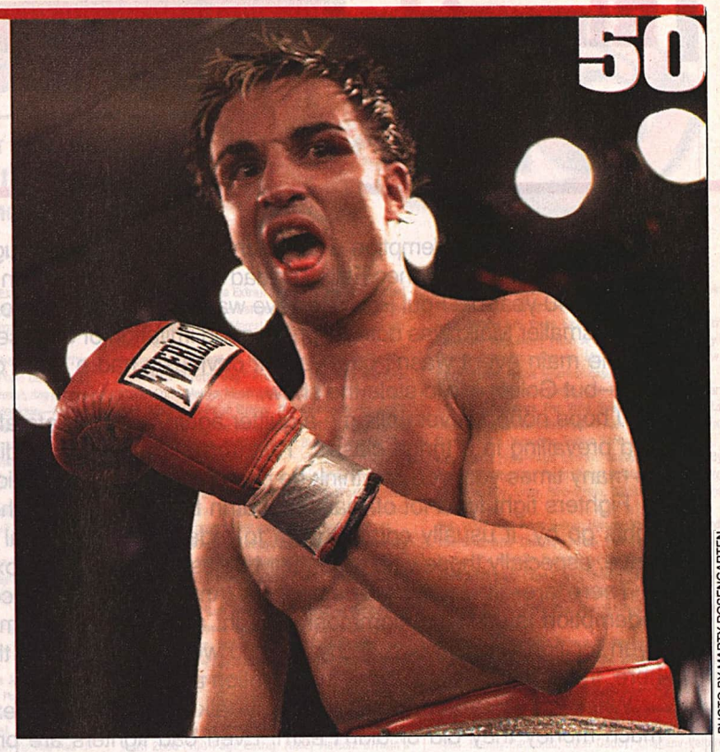
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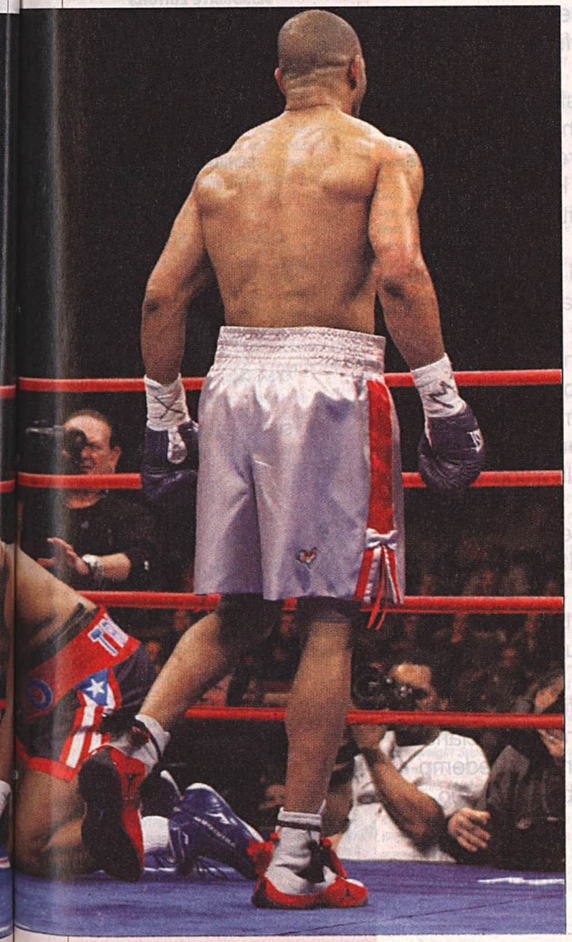

Departments

8 Ringside *by Nigel Collins*

10 Round One

18 Ryan Out Loud *by Jeff Ryan*

22 Digging Deep *by Ivan Goldman*

26 Camera Clicks

28 New Faces: Yuriokis Gamboa
by Robert Cassidy

110 Worldwide Fight Results

124 Showdown: Enzo Maccarinelli-David Haye

128 Flashback: May 1988

130 The Fight Doctor *by Margaret Goodman, M.D.*

132 Hitting On The Break *by Jim Bagg*

136 Come Out Writing

138 Looking Ahead *by Eric Raskin*

Volume 87, No. 6 May 2008

The Ring

I thought about redemption a lot watching Andrew Golota slug it out with Mike Mollo on the Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad undercard at Madison Square Garden. The 40-year-old Foul Pole's left eye was swollen shut, Cyclops-style, and the much smaller Mollo was doing a pretty good imitation of Odysseus.

The main event wasn't bad—and it obviously had a lot to do with redemption—but Golota-Mollo stole the show.

"I hope nobody ever calls me a quitter again," said Golota after sucking it up and prevailing in a fringe classic. This from a guy who has disgraced himself so many times you wouldn't think he cared anymore. But he did.

Fighters fight for a lot of reasons, but in the end, after all the years and the fights go by, it usually comes down to redemption—the final goal of all who strive, especially those who bare their bodies and souls in a boxing ring.

There are all kinds of redemptions. Among fighters, of course, financial redemption is the most commonly sought and certainly the most elusive. But even for fighters who end up broke, and we're talking about the vast majority here, there is a different kind of redemption available.

When old fighters get together, they talk about their ring exploits, not how much money they did or didn't earn. Even bad fighters are proud and brave, and on that level, redemption can come by lasting the distance against a guy who was supposed to knock you out, or giving a main event fighter a decent round of work in the gym.

In a way, the same dynamic is at work with highly successful fighters. For that select group, redemption is about legacy and going out on their own terms.

Oscar De La Hoya's grand scheme for his three-fight farewell year has everything to do with redemption, albeit in typical Oscar style. He's got everything anybody could ever wish for, and now he wants to go out in the manner befitting a star of his magnitude.

Losing a decision to Floyd Mayweather doesn't cut it, and that's why the rematch is slotted between "The Golden Boy's" tuneup in May and his farewell fight. That way, regardless of what happens against Floyd the second time, a measure of redemption will still be available in Oscar's career finale.

Even Mayweather, his ego bruised by widespread accusations that his win over De La Hoya was boring, was seeking a measure of redemption when he decided to open up and stop Ricky Hatton. And why do you think Manny Pacquiao actually showed up on time at Freddie Roach's Hollywood gym to start training for his rematch with Juan Manuel Marquez?

For the rematch with Marco Antonio Barrera, Manny made poor Freddie chase him all the way to Cebu before he finally buckled down. It's different this time because Pac-Man is seeking redemption. Marquez fought him to a standstill back in 2004, and the idol of millions of Filipinos on both sides of the Pacific knows he has to do better in the rematch, and not just to keep the money rolling in.

We all seek redemption of some sort or another, but the fighter's search plays out upon a public stage, and we watch, both witnesses and beneficiaries to their struggle. For when they succeed, we share vicariously in their redemption and know that if it is possible for them, it just might be possible for us too.

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Sept. 2001 (108-Page Extra): Exclusive Ring Interview—Hasim Rahman: "Nobody's Taking My Titles!" Plus: 20 all-time greatest lightweights, Pat Valentino, Hopkins & King, Jones & Arum.

Dec. 2001: The Rock Promises Another Shock! "I'm Gonna Knock Lennox Out Again!" Plus: David Reid, Jones-Gonzalez, McCline-Grant, Jackie Graves, ring deaths.

May 2002 (108-Page Extra): Bernard Hopkins—Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Holyfield-Ruiz III, 2000 Olympians, Eric Harding, "Silent" Hairston.

June 2002: Lennox Lewis: I'll End The Tyson "Freak Show!" Plus: Forrest-Mosley, Freitas-Casamayor, De La Hoya & Vargas, Hagler & Leonard.

Aug. 2002: Lewis vs. Tyson: Who Will Win ... And What Happens Next. Plus: Michael Moorer, Jeff Fenech, Charley Parham, Rafael & Juan Manuel Marquez.

Sept. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Vernon Forrest—Next Step In The Master Plan: End Mosley's Career. Plus: Sugar Ray Leonard, Roberto Duran, Ricardo Mayorga, 20 greatest lightweights.

Oct. 2002: Tito' Back ... And He's "Going To Make Hopkins Pay!" Plus: Ward-Gatti, Bouie Fisher, controversial scoring, ruining prospects.

Nov. 2002 (108-Page Extra): Monster Mashed! Can A New Tyson Emerge From The Rubble? Plus: The Ring 100, Evander Holyfield, Don King, Billy Joiner, junior welters.

March 2003 (108-Page Extra): Hamed ... Morales ... Tapia: Barrera Has Punched His Ticket To The Hall Of Fame. Also: Joe Mesi, Ricardo Lopez, Pipino Cuevas, alphabet tales, what's ahead for '03.

May 2003 (108-Page Extra): Ali ... Leonard ... Tyson ... Klitschko? Also: Year-end awards, Chris Byrd, Lupe Pintor, Maxie Rosenbloom.

June 2003: Exclusive! The Ring Grills George Foreman. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Ricardo Mayorga, Diego Corrales, Tommy Loughran.

July 2003 (108-Page Extra): Now What, Roy? How Jones Matches Up Against The Heavyweight Elite. Also: Mike Tyson, Marquez Brothers, Ricardo Williams, Tony Zale.

Aug. 2003: The Ring Unscrambles The Heavyweight Mess. Also: Bernard Hopkins, Scott Harrison, Billy Warren, Latino revolution, cups.

Sept. 2003 (108-Page Extra): Oscar At 30: Forget About Retirement ... He Has Revenge On His Mind. Also: Mayorga-Forrest II preview, James Toney, Barney Ross, HBO, report cards.

Nov. 2003 (108-Page Extra): Healing And Hungry: Vitali Klitschko—Is He The Man To Retire Lewis? Also: Gatti-Ward III, Holyfield-Toney, Dominick Guinn, Lee Roy Murphy, The Ring 100.

April 2004: Antonio Tarver: "It's Not About Roy Jones Anymore." Also: Pacquiao-Barrera, Floyd Mayweather, all punch/no chin, Rinty Monaghan.

June 2004: The Lewis Retirment: Will He Come Back? Also: Scott Pemberton, Jones-Tarver preview, James McGirt, James J. Braddock.

Summer 2004: Squeezed Out: Is There A Superfight For Felix Trinidad? Also: Joe Mesi, Miguel Cotto, Winky Wright, Ceferino Garcia.

Oct. 2004 (100-Page Extra): The Executioner: There's No Escape For De La Hoya! Also: Verno Phillips, Jose Luis Castillo, Felix Sturm, James Toney, Jeff Lacy, one-punch kayos

Fall 2004: Trinidad vs. Mayorga: Comeback Or Calamity. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Marco Antonio Barrera, Juan Diaz, Jimmy Clabby.

Feb. 2005 (100-Page Extra): The Incredible Comeback Of Felix Trinidad—Just The Boost Boxing Needs! **Also: Glen Johnson, Klitschko-Williams preview, Kasim Ouma, Tony Lopez, Paul Berlenbach, bodypunching.**

Winter 2005: 1980s vs. Today: Comparing The Middleweight Superstars. *Also: Roy Jones, Leija-Gatti preview, Terry Downes, comebacks.*

April 2005 (100-Page Extra): How Kostya Tszyu Mastered The Sweet Science: The Metamorphosis Of A Near-Perfect Fighter. *Also: Barrera-Morales III, Winky Wright, Vivian Harris, 10 greatest title reigns, 10 burning questions.*

Spring 2005—Svelter Welter: Moving To 147 Will Tip The Scale In Oscar's Favor. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Glen Johnson, Andre Ward, Johnny Persol.

June 2005 (100-Page Extra): Tito vs. Winky: Is Trinidad Facing Hopkins-Like Danger? Also: Zab Judah, Ricky Hatton, Kassim Ouma, Marcel Thil & Eugene Criqui, all-star report cards.

Summer 2005: Gatti vs. Mayweather: Will This Be The Mismatch "Pretty Boy" Predicts? Also: Erik Morales, Miguel Cotto, Mahyar Monshipour, Pinky Silverberg.

Aug. 2005 (100-Page Extra): *The Contender:* Boxing's Ticket Back To The Mainstream? Also: Jorge Acar, Hopkins vs. Jones, Riddick Bowe, Buster Douglas, The State of the Game.

Oct. 2005 (100-Page Extra): Our Man Hatton—Working-Class Warrior Becomes A World-Class Superstar. Plus: Wright-Trinidad, Corrales-Castillo, Kingsley Ikeke, great career comebacks, featherweights.

Dec. 2005 (100-Page Extra): Jermain Taylor: Can We Call Him The World's Greatest Middleweight? Plus: Corrales-Castillo II forecast, Amir Khan, Barry McGuigan, The Ring 100.

Fall 2005: Jeff "Left Hook" Lacy: Bringing Excitement Back To The Super Middles. Plus: Fernando Vargas, Rahman-Klitschko, Taylor-Hopkins, boxing pitchmen.

Feb. 2006 (100-Page Extra): Castillo-Corrales II: When The Rule-Breakers Win ... It's Time To Reevaluate The System. Plus: Antonio Tarver, Cotto-Torres, Peter-Klitschko, Marco Antonio Barrera, Zahir Raheem, Leavander Johnson, Max Baer.

April 2006 (100-Page Extra): Ricky Hatton: Britain's First Fighter Of The Year. Plus: Year-end awards, Jermain Taylor, Calzaghe-Lacy preview, Israel Vazquez, Zsolt Erdei.

June 2006 (100-Page Extra): Who Needs The Heavyweights? Plus: De La Hoya-Mayorga preview, Pacquiao-Morales, Carlos Baldomir, Castillo-Reyes, Alvin Felicilda, Jason Litzau, Turpin brothers.

Aug. 2006 (100-Page Extra): No Gimme For Gatti: Baldomir Has More Than A Fat Chance. Plus: Floyd Mayweather, Arce-Alvarez, Mosley-Vargas II preview, Frank Warren, Native American casinos, heavyweights.

Oct. 2006 (100-Page Extra): One Final Fight For Oscar: The Ring Answers The Vital Questions About De La Hoya-Mayweather. Also: Hasim Rahman, Marco Antonio Barrera, 2004 Olympians, Robbie Sims, Cotto-Malignaggi.

Dec. 2006 (100-Page Extra): Taking The World By Force: "Pretty Boy" Floyd Guns For Baldomir. Also: Oleg Maskaev, Roy Jones, Nino-Viloria, Battling Siki, Argentine fighters.

Feb. 2007 (100-Page Extra): Nicolay Valuev: The Good, The Bad, And The Ugly. Also: Joel Casamayor, Ricky Hatton, The Mosleys, Sugar-Sugar-Oscar, Len Matthews.

April 2007 (100-Page Extra): Manny Pacquiao—Fighter Of The Year. Also: Year-end awards, Jermain Taylor, Roberto Duran, Willie Pep, Ring Ratings Advisory Panel, fighting overseas.

June 2007 (100-Page Extra): 25-Page Special Section: Golden Boy vs. Pretty Boy—The World Awaits. Also: Shane Mosley, Chad Dawson, Kelly Pavlik, Pernell Whitaker.

Aug. 2007 (100-Page Extra): De La Hoya vs. Mayweather—Questions Answered ... Questions Raised. Also: Manny Pacquiao, John Duddy, Chagaev-Valuev, Calzaghe-Kessler, Wright-Hopkins.

Oct. 2007 (100-Page Extra): Cotto On The Verge of Greatness ... But Is It Too Soon To Fight Floyd? Also: Vitali Klitschko, Rafael Marquez, Kelly Pavlick, David Haye, Jimmy Carter.

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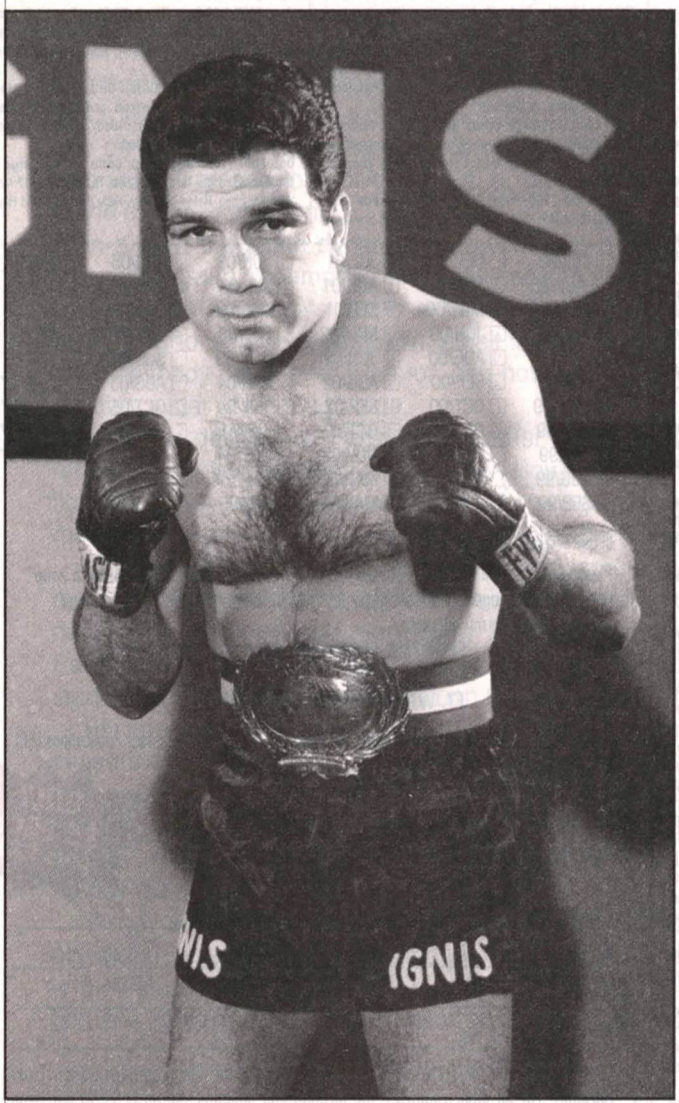
Duilio Loi, 1929-2008

A lot of U.S. boxing fans had never heard of former junior welterweight champion Duilio Loi, 78, until he died on January 20, at the Padre Pio Hospital in Treviso, Italy. But during the 1950s and early-'60s, Loi's popularity in his native land was virtually unprecedented. Both of his bouts with Carlos Ortiz in Italy drew crowds in excess of 60,000 to Milan's San Siro Stadium, and on at least one occasion he literally stopped traffic.

"The first time Loi fought Ortiz in Italy, a Milan trolley car driver spotted the fight on TV in a bar," recalled Italian boxing writer Vittorio Parisi. "He told the passengers, 'Hey, Loi is on television.' They left the trolley car in the street and all went into the bar together to watch the fight."



Loi in his prime

Loi was a short, swarming pressure fighter who bobbed and weaved his way inside the reach of taller fighters, where he would smother opponents with his non-stop attack. Together with his incredible stamina and a granite chin, it was a combination that often broke the spirit of his opponents.

Born in Trieste, Loi turned pro in November 1948 in Genoa, won the Italian lightweight title in '51 and the European lightweight title in '54. He did not, however, get a shot at a world title until 1960, when he lost a 15-round split decision to junior welter champ Ortiz in San Francisco. The Italian's strong showing earned him a rematch in Italy, and on September 1, 1960, he beat Ortiz via majority decision to capture the belt. Loi also won the rubber match, taking a unanimous decision over Ortiz in '61, dropping the Puerto Rican great en route to earning the most definitive fight conclusion of their trilogy.

In October '61, American Eddie Perkins held Loi to a 15-round draw, and then took the 140-pound title away from Loi in a September '62 rematch. Loi regained the title with a controversial decision over Perkins in December '62, but never fought again.

"In the dressing room after the third Perkins fight, Loi asked writer Giorgio Tosatti if the judges had given him the nod as a present," said Parisi. "Tosatti told him yes, so Loi asked him to write that he was quitting boxing immediately."

After his final fight, Loi ran a restaurant with his wife, but in the 1970s, tragedy struck when their son, Vittorio, killed a police officer during a neo-fascist demonstration. Although he did whatever he could to help his son, the case hit Loi harder than any ring opponent.

In his later years, Loi suffered from Alzheimer's disease and depended on a monthly pension the Italian government provides for important people in financial difficulties.

Loi, who tallied a remarkable 115-3-8 (26) record during his 14-year pro career, was never stopped and is considered, along with Anacleto Locatelli and Bruno Arcari, one of Italy's greatest boxers ever, and a notch above Nino Benvenuti, who said as much upon learning of Loi's death. Loi was elected to the International Boxing Hall of Fame in 2005.

Yoi-sam Choi, 1972-2008

Former WBC junior flyweight titleholder Yoi-sam Choi, 33, was declared brain dead a week after going into a coma immediately following his 12-round decision over Henri Amol in Seoul, South Korea, on December 25, 2007. Choi, 32-5 (19), had been knocked down late in the final round, but got up and was announced the winner before collapsing. Choi's family requested that he be officially pronounced dead following the removal of his organs for transplantation.

Choi, who turned pro in 1993, captured the WBC junior flyweight title in October '99, winning a 12-round decision over Saman Sorjaturong. He made three successful defenses before losing the belt to Jorge Arce in July '02. Choi also lost his next three fights, including a WBA flyweight title bout to Lorenzo Parra, but entered the Amol fight on a four-bout winning streak.

"He had a hard life," said Choi's mother. "I hope he has gone to a peaceful place."

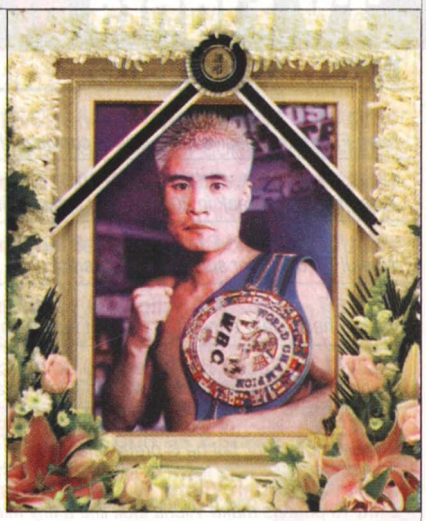
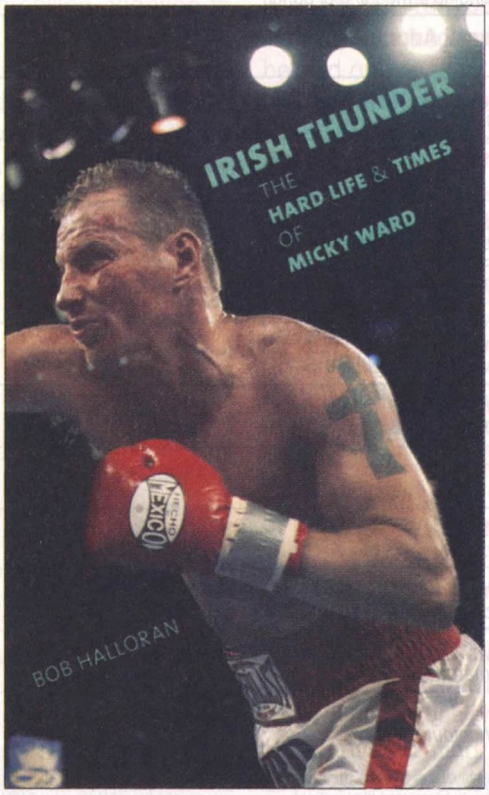


PHOTO BY JEON YOUNG-HAN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

A memorial to fallen boxer Choi

Boxing Bookshelf

For many young men who come from bad surroundings, boxing is a way out. But in Lowell, Massachusetts, where Micky Ward is from, boxing is just another vice that leads nowhere. If his volatile neighborhood wasn't a big enough obstacle, Ward's career seemed destined to implode thanks to his family: His father, George Ward, was a con artist who fleeced old ladies of their savings; Dick Eklund, Ward's brother and trainer, was a crack addict and robber; Alice Ward, Micky's mother-manager, pushed the often injured Micky into fights he wasn't ready for, derailing his career in the early-1990s. Through shear stubbornness and longevity, "Irish Micky" eventually earned a few good paydays for his trilogy with Arturo Gatti. Bob Halloran's highly readable new book, *Irish Thunder, The Hard Life & Times Of Micky Ward* (The Lyons Press, hardcover, 278 pages, $24.95) chronicles the ups and downs of Ward's career.



Halloran, a former ESPN reporter, paints an unsettling picture of Ward's childhood. Petty criminals, broken down fighters, substance abusers, violent cops, and epic street brawls provided the backdrop for Ward's early life. Halloran has plenty of drama to wade through, including Eklund's vowing to stay clean during Ward's later career. But the real triumph of Ward's life is not that he forged a career out of so much turmoil. Rather, it's that he hasn't been accidentally killed by his unstable brother. The table is certainly set for such an ending.

There are no heroes in the book. When his shady family is not badgering him, Ward is manipulated by shady boxing types. The only decent character in the story is Mickey O'Keefe, an ex-cop who trained Ward while Eklund was in prison. O'Keefe got pushed aside when Eklund returned. (When he sensed Ward could earn some real money, the opportunistic Eklund straightened out for a while. Since Ward's retirement, Eklund has been busted for drug possession, was a suspect in a murder case, and tricked Micky into signing away the rights to his life story.)

As each chapter passes, you wish Ward would disown the clan and move away. Instead, like an abused child who fears the outside world may be worse than his ugly home life, Ward expresses a vague sentiment about "loyalty" and stays put.

Thirty rounds with Gatti was easy. Try growing up in Lowell with this bunch.

—Don Stradley

TV Fights of the Month

Compiled By Martin Mulcahey

DATE	WINNER/LOSER	NETWORK	DIVISION	SIGNIFICANCE	MATCHUP	RESULT
12/20/07	**Tye Fields KO 1 Chris Koval** *Even Fields' impressive kayo fails to convince that he is for real*	Versus	h	C-	C-	C
12/20/07	**Joshua Clottey W 12 Shamone Alvarez** *Three-fight win streak in 2007 earns Clottey a title shot in 2008*	Versus	w	B-	B-	C+
12/21/07	**David Rodriguez W 8 Marcus McGee** *Woeful TV debut for supposed kayo artist*	Telefutura	h	C-	C-	C-
12/21/07	**Urbano Antillon KO 1 Adrian Valdez** *Valdez' head clear enough to wait out the 10-count*	Telefutura	l	C	C	C-
12/28/07	**Robert Hawkins W 10 Dominick Guinn** *Guinn makes late run at 2007 wasted talent award*	ESPN2	h	C+	C+	C-
01/04/08	**Michel Rosales KO 2 Dairo Esalas** *Rosales not pretty, but he is pretty effective*	Telefutura	jw	C	C-	C
01/04/08	**Brian Viloria W 8 Jose Bernal** *Extra 10 pounds make Viloria look like a tiny Michelin Man*	Telefutura	jf	B-	C-	C
01/04/08	**Zahir Raheem KO 1 Ricardo Dominguez** *Beautiful hook, but Dominguez shows even less heart than chin*	ESPN2	l	B	C	B-
01/04/08	**Allan Green W 10 Rubin Williams** *ESPN2 covers Green's medical history as much as fight*	ESPN2	sm	B	C+	C
01/04/08	**Anthony Peterson KO 8 Jose Izquierdo** *Late power separates a hot pro prospect from a great amateur*	Showtime	l	C+	B+	B-
01/04/08	**Lamont Peterson W 10 Antonio Mesquita** *Elusive Peterson picks apart frustrated Brazilian power-puncher*	Showtime	jw	C+	B	C
01/05/08	**Paul Malignaggi W 12 Herman Ngoudjo** *Eye-catching titleholder gets decision without landing a meaningful punch*	Showtime	jw	A-	A-	B
01/11/08	**Vicente Escobedo W 10 Pascali Adorno** *Former Olympian has not scored a kayo since 2006*	Telefutura	l	C	C	C
01/11/08	**Sergio Mora KO 6 Rito Ruvalcaba** *Referee should get more credit for stoppage than Mora*	Telefutura	m	B-	C	C
01/11/08	**Jean Pascal W 10 Omar Pittman** *Pascal struggles with Philly journeyman*	ESPN2	sm	B-	C	C+
01/11/08	**Edison Miranda KO 3 David Banks** *Savage punch leaves Banks stiffer than the ropes he was suspended on*	ESPN2	sm	B	C-	A-
01/18/08	**Raul Martinez W 8 Alex Baba** *Baba could not beat Martinez in a 1001 nights*	Telefutura	b	C	C+	C+
01/18/08	**Jesus Soto Karass W 10 Germaine Sanders** *Steady Mexican now undefeated over three years and 10 fights*	Telefutura	w	C+	C+	C
01/18/08	**Eric Fields KO 1 Kelvin Davis** *Four-hit fight, Fields hits Davis and Davis hits the floor—twice*	ESPN2	c	C+	B+	B
01/18/08	**Randall Bailey KO 5 Anthony Mora** *This was a bazooka vs. a popgun*	ESPN2	jw	C+	D	D+
01/19/08	**Devon Alexander W 12 DeMarcus Corley** *Prospect adds first former titleholder to his resume*	PPV	jw	C+	B	C
01/19/08	**Alex Bunema KO 10 Roman Karmazin** *Crushing upset kayo extinguishes title hopes for Karmazin*	PPV	jm	B	C+	B
01/19/08	**Andrew Golota W 12 Mike Mollo** *Why couldn't Golota show this kind of heart in marquee fights?*	PPV	h	B-	B-	A-
01/19/08	**Roy Jones Jr. W 12 Felix Trinidad** *Physically superior fighter wins mid-life crisis shootout*	PPV	sm	A	A-	B

Category Explanation: "Significance"—The importance of the bout to the division and the fighters' futures; "Matchup"—The quality of the fighters and the prefight determination of how their styles will mesh; "Result"—How the bout turned out, from the viewer's perspective.

(RING championship fights in **bold** type)

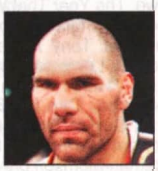
Division key: h—heavyweight; c—cruiserweight; lh—light heavyweight; sm—super middleweight; m—middleweight; jm—junior middleweight; w—welterweight; jw—junior welterweight; l—lightweight; jl—junior lightweight; f—featherweight; jf—junior featherweight; b—bantamweight; jb—junior bantamweight; fl—flyweight; jfl—junior flyweight; s—strawweight

Network key: PPV—Pay-Per-View; Show—Showtime; FOXSN—Fox Sports Net; Uni—Univision; Telef—Telefutura; Telem—Telemundo

Outside the Ropes

Millie Corretjer, the wife of **Oscar De La Hoya**, gave birth to their second child, **Nina Lauren Nenitte**, on December 29 in San Juan, Puerto Rico. Little Nina weighed in at 7 pounds, 13 ounces … Critics of **Muhammad Ali** always felt he had an inflated opinion of himself, and now it's official: Fathead LLC, the Livonia, Michigan-based company that produces life-size wall graphics, announced in January that Ali had been added to its lineup of colorful vinyl portraits of popular sports stars known as Fatheads … Heavyweight **Sultan Ibragimov** has been named the Russian Professional Boxing Federation's 2007 Fighter of the Year … **Jason E. Turner**, 38, was appointed the new head of the District of Columbia Boxing and Wrestling Commission by D.C. Mayor Adrian Fenty. Turner, who has a sales and business background, replaced **Dr. Arnold W. Knight**, who died in July after serving as commissioner for 12 years … **Larry Hazzard**, who was fired on November 15 following almost 22 years as New Jersey boxing commissioner, has filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court in Camden, New Jersey, asking for immediate reinstatement, as well as unspecified compensatory and punitive damages. According to the *Philadelphia Daily News*, "It is the contention of Hazzard and his legal team that he was dismissed because he persisted in calling attention to alleged improprieties committed by a New Jersey State Athletic Control Board employee" … **Keith Kizer**, executive director of the Nevada State Athletic Commission, said that the commission would go forward with disciplinary proceedings against middleweight **Joey Gilbert**, now that tests on a second or "B" urine sample confirmed the presence of a banned substance in his system when Gilbert knocked out **Charles Howe** on September 21, 2007 … According to reports in the Nigerian media, there was an attempt on the life of heavyweight contender **Sam Peter** when he visited his homeland in December 2007. The incident took place at the Le Meridien Hotel in Uyo, Akwa, where the fighter was staying. "Peter had a minor domestic squabble with his wife, who invited her brother and an uncle, who, rather than settle the misunderstanding, attempted to kill the heavyweight boxer," said police inspector **Mike Okiro**. Allegedly, **Godwin Edet Etin** (Mrs. Peter's brother) had cocked a pump-action shotgun and was about to shoot when three policemen on duty at the hotel intervened. Eded Etin, who was arraigned along with **Anthony Afia** (the wife's uncle), claimed he was only planning to use the gun as a scare tactic … In early-January, British lightweight contender **Amir Khan**, 21, was fined and banned from driving for six weeks, after a police officer told a Rochdale Magistrates' Court that he had clocked Khan driving in excess of 140 mph. In October 2007, Khan received a six-month driving ban for careless driving after he knocked down a pedestrian … Former WBA heavyweight titlist **Nikolay Valuev**, 34, was fined 30,000 rubles ($1,228) and ordered to pay an additional 100,000 rubles ($4,075) in compensation for punching 61-year-old **Yuri Sergeyev** outside a St. Petersburg, Russia, sports complex in January 2006. Valuev claimed he had only tried to "shake off" Sergeyev after the man insulted the boxer's wife, Galina. "Just imagine what would have happened to that old man if I really punched him," said Valuev … Former WBA light heavyweight titleholder **Mehdi Sahnoune**, 31, was sentenced to three years in prison, of which two years were suspended, for his part in a gang attack on a fisherman outside of a nightclub in France. **Abdelaziz El Hermi**, 27, was cornered by Sahnoune and five other men and beaten so badly he suffered six skull fractures. Sahnoune, 31-2 (27), last fought on October 22, 2005, when he was stopped in the 12th round by **Zsolt Erdei** … Longtime Los Angeles sportscaster **Stu Naham**, 81, died at his home in Studio City, California, on December 26. Naham played the role of the blow-by-blow commentator in the *Rocky* movies … **Alvin Goodman**, 79, former chairman of the Florida Athletic Commission and former longtime member of the Miami Boxing Commission, committed suicide on January 7 … Australian TV commentator **Clinton Grybas**, 32, was found dead in his Melbourne apartment on January 5. Police said they were investigating the possibility that Grybas, who worked for Fox Sports and Melbourne radio station 3AW, fell and hit his head while sleepwalking. In his final boxing assignment, Grybas called the **Tony Mundine-Antonio Clavero** fight on December 10 in Sydney.

Ibragimov: Russia's Fighter of the Year



Valuev: Fined for assault

Sahnoune: Jailed for assault

Quotable

"I think I can come back and fight again and win a championship because I don't consider myself finished. There's nothing unusual in taking a long break, like Roy Jones or Felix Trinidad have done. I saw the action between Armando Santa Cruz and Joel Casamayor, and I believe that at this point I do better."

—Erik Morales, explaining why he is making a comeback despite losing his last four fights

"I think the producers warned her that I've knocked out 21 of 29 opponents, so she treated me with care. Either that or she took a fancy to me!"

—Cruiserweight contender Enzo Maccarinelli, commenting on how nice fearsome host Anne Robinson was to him when he appeared on BBC's ***The Weakest Link***

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Winter 1996: Myth vs. Reality. In Search Of The True Tyson (color). Plus: Lonnie Bradley, George Foreman & HBO, Bowe-Golota II preview.

Spring 1997: Is Andrew Golota Too Dangerous For Boxing? Plus: Bowe-Golota II (color), Michael Moorer, top heavyweight fights of '96, fantasy boxing, short fighters.

Summer 1997: Building The Perfect Heavyweight ... One Piece At A Time (color). Plus: Nielsen-Holmes, *Heavyweight Explosion*, fantasy boxing.

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[All-color beginning with the March 2001 issue]

March 2001: The Ultimate Boxing Ratings. Plus: Tyson-Golota, Marco Antonio Barrera, Joel Cassamayor.

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May 2004: Vitali Klitschko: Anothe Step Toward "World Domination. Plus: Shane Mosley, junior middle repor card, when losers win, 2003 in review.

Sept. 2004: Hopkins vs. De La Hoya What Is Oscar Thinking? Plus: Wright Mosley, Corrales-Casamayor, Gle Johnson, Felix Sturm, Lennox Lewis 2004 Hall of Fame, lightweight repor card.

Dec. 2004: What's Next? Has Mike Tyson Run Out Of Options? Plus Gatti & Leija, Kermit Cintron, Floyd Mayweather, British boxing slump ultimate ratings, featherweight repor card.

April 2005: Tszyu Erases Mitchell And All Doubts. Plus: Roy Jones Judah-Spinks preview, Travis Simms Carl Thompson, Bernard Hopkins, old age.

Dec. 2005: Corrales vs. Castillo: Ca The Rematch Measure Up To Th Original? Plus: Floyd Mayweathe Taylor-Hopkins, Kevin McBride, Za Judah, great rematch fighter middleweight report card.

Summer 2006: Pac-Man To Th Rescue! Can A 130-Pound Filipin Carry Boxing On His Back? Plus Oscar De La Hoya, Arturo Gatti, O'Ne Bell, Martin Castillo, Mikkel Kessler, 1 greatest junior light fights, cruiserweigh report card.

Winter 2006: Morales vs. Pacquiao: You Think You Know Who's Gonn Win ... Think Again! Plus: Vargas Gatti, Angelo Dundee, Carl Froch second-generation fighters, fighting pa 40, 20 greatest Puerto Ricans.

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[Ratings Analysis]

For Period Ended January 21, 2008

Heavyweights: Ruslan Chagaev (fourth last issue) switches with Oleg Maskeav (third last issue), due to Maskaev's inactivity.
Cruiserweights: No changes.
Light Heavyweights: A major realignment as Roy Jones re-enters the ratings at seven and Danny Green (ninth last issue) moves up to six. The shakeup moves down Paul Briggs (sixth last issue), Julio Gonzalez (seventh last issue), and Adrian Diaconu (eighth last issue) two places each. Hugo Garay (10th last issue) exits.
Super Middleweights: Edison Miranda debuts at 10, while Juan Pascal (10th last issue) exits, based on his weak performance against Omar Pittman.
Middleweights: No changes.
Junior Middleweights: Roman Karmazin (second last issue) falls to eight due to his kayo loss to Alex Bunea, who enters at four. Vernon Forrest (fourth last issue) jumps to two, while Ike Quartey (eighth last issue) exits due to inactivity.
Welterweights: No changes.
Junior Welterweights: Herman Ngoudjo re-enters at 10, thanks to his strong performance against second-rated Paul Malignaggi. Kendall Holt (10th last issue) exits.
Lightweights: No changes.
Junior Lightweights: No changes.
Featherweights: Injin Chi (third last issue) exits due to inactivity, moving everyone from four to nine up one spot each. Thomas Mashaba debuts at nine.
Junior Featherweights: No changes.
Bantamweights: No changes.
Junior Bantamweights: Katsushige Kawashima (seventh last issue) has retired, moving everyone from eight to 10 up one spot and making room for Vic Darchinyan to enter at 10.
Flyweights: Darchinyan (sixth last issue) exits to campaign at junior bantamweight, moving everyone from seven to 10 up one place and enabling Wandee Singwancha to enter at 10.
Junior Flyweights: Brian Viloria (eighth last issue) exits to fight as a junior bantamweight, allowing Omar Salado and Brahim Asloum to climb one spot each and making room for Juan Carlos Reveco to re-enter the rating at 10.
Strawweights: No changes.
Pound-for-pound: No changes.

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Pound-For-Pound

1. **Floyd Mayweather**
   Welterweight
2. **Manny Pacquiao**
   Junior Lightweight
3. **Juan Manuel Marquez**
   Junior Lightweight
4. **Bernard Hopkins**
   Light Heavyweight
5. **Joe Calzaghe**
   Super Middleweight
6. **Israel Vazquez**
   Junior Featherweight
7. **Miguel Cotto**
   Welterweight
8. **Ricky Hatton**
   Junior Welterweight
9. **Winky Wright**
   Middleweight
10. **Rafael Marquez**
    Junior Featherweight

For weekly updated Ring ratings, go to **TheRing-online.com**

The Ring Ratings

For Period Ended January 21, 2008

How Our Ratings Are Compiled

Fighters recognized as champions by The Ring are rated at the top of their division, with the top 10 contenders listed below.

Championship vacancies can be filled by winning a box-off between The Ring's number-one and number-two contenders, or, in certain instances, a box-off between our number-one and number-three contenders.

The only three occasions when a fighter will lose his championship status are when he retires, moves to another weight division, or is defeated in a championship bout.

The Ring Ratings are compiled by the magazine's editorial board, with the participation of The Ring Ratings Panel of boxing journalists from around the world. To see the complete list of our panelists, click on "Ratings" at thering-online.com

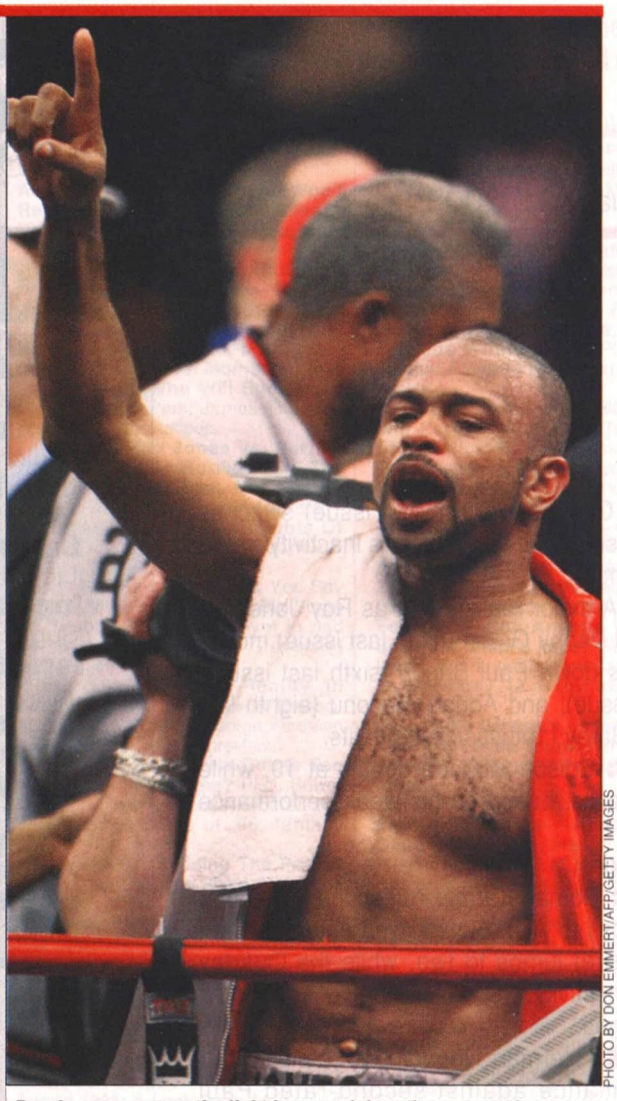

PHOTO BY DON EMMERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Roy Jones re-enters the light heavyweight ratings at number seven

Heavyweights

Weight Unlimited

Champ: Vacant

1. **WLADIMIR KLITSCHKO** Ukraine 49-3 (44)
2. **SAMUEL PETER** Las Vegas, NV 29-1 (22)
3. **RUSLAN CHAGAEV** Uzbekistan 24-0-1 (17)
4. **OLEG MASKAEV** Sacramento, CA 34-5 (26)
5. **NICOLAY VALUEV** Russia 47-1 (34)
6. **SULTAN IBRAGIMOV** Russia 22-0-1 (17)
7. **SERGEI LIAKHOVICH** Belarus, 23-2 (14)
8. **VLADIMIR VIRCHIS** Ukraine 24-1 (20)
9. **TONY THOMPSON** Washington, D.C. 31-1 (19)
10. **ALEXANDER POVETKIN** Russia 14-0 (11)

Jr. Middleweights

Weight Limit: 154 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CORY SPINKS** St. Louis, MO 36-4 (11)
2. **VERNON FORREST** Atlanta, GA 40-2 (29)
3. **OSCAR DE LA HOYA** Los Angeles, CA 38-5 (30)
4. **ALEX BUNEMA** Atlanta, GA 29-5-2 (15)
5. **JOACHIM ALCINE** Canada 30-0 (19)
6. **SERGEI DZINZIRUK** Germany 34-0 (22)
7. **TRAVIS SIMMS** Norwalk, CT 25-1 (19)
8. **ROMAN KARMAZIN** Russia 36-3-1 (23)
9. **VERNO PHILLIPS** Aurora, CO 41-10-1 (21)
10. **SERGIO MARTINEZ** Spain 40-1-1 (21)

Featherweights

Weight Limit: 126 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **CHRIS JOHN** Indonesia 40-0-1 (21)
2. **ROBERT GUERRERO** Gilroy, CA 21-1-1 (14)
3. **HIROYUKI ENOKI** Japan 27-0-1 (19)
4. **JORGE SOLIS** Mexico 32-1-2 (23)
5. **NAOKI MATSUDA** Japan 28-7-3 (11)
6. **STEVEN LUEVANO** La Puente, CA 34-1 (15)
7. **JORGE LINARES** Venezuela 25-0 (16)
8. **MARTIN HONORIO** Mexico 24-4-1 (12)
9. **THOMAS MASHABA** South Africa 20-2-4 (12)
10. **NICKY COOK** England 27-1(15)

Jr. Featherweights

Weight Limit: 122 pounds

Champ: ISRAEL VAZQUEZ Mexico 42-4 (31)

1. **RAFAEL MARQUEZ** Mexico 37-4 (33)
2. **CELESTINO CABALLERO** Panama 28-2 (19)
3. **DANIEL PONCE DE LEON** Mexico 34-1 (30)
4. **STEVE MOLITOR** Canada 26-0 (10)
5. **SOMSAK SITHCHATCHAWAL** Thailand 54-2-1 (43)
6. **SERGIO MANUEL MEDINA** Argentina 29-1 (17)
7. **TAKALANI NDLOVU** South Africa 27-4 (17)
8. **POONSAWAT KRATINGAENGGYM** Thailand 31-1 (20)
9. **KIKO MARTINEZ** Spain 17-0 (14)
10. **REY BAUTISTA** Philippines 24-1(18)

Bantamweights

Weight Limit: 118 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **HOZUMI HASEGAWA** Japan 23-2 (7)
2. **VEERAPOL SAHAPROM** Thailand 58-3-2 (42)
3. **WLADIMIR SIDORENKO** Ukraine 21-0-2 (7)
4. **SILENCE MABUZA** South Africa 20-2 (16)
5. **GERRY PENALOSA** Philippines 52-6-2 (35)
6. **JHONNY GONZALEZ** Mexico 35-6 (29)
7. **RICARDO CORDOBA** Panama 31-1-2 (20)
8. **JOSEPH AGBEKO** Ghana 25-1 (22)
9. **SIMONE MALUDROTTU** Italy 25-2 (10)
10. **LUIS PEREZ** Nicaragua 25-2 (16)

Cruiserweights
Weight Limit: 200 pounds

Champ: DAVID HAYE
England 20-1 (19)

1. **STEVE CUNNINGHAM**
Philadelphia, PA 21-1 (11)
2. **JEAN-MARC MORMECK**
France 33-4 (22)
3. **O'NEIL BELL**
Atlanta, GA 26-2-1 (24)
4. **KRZYSZTOF WLODARCZYK**
Poland 39-2 (29)
5. **ENZO MACCARINELLI**
Wales 28-1 (21)
6. **FIRAT ARSLAN**
Germany 28-3-1 (18)
7. **MARCO HUCK**
Germany 19-1 (13)
8. **VADIM TOKAREV**
Russia 24-1-1 (17)
9. **DARNELL WILSON**
Tacoma Park, MD 22-5-3 (19)
10. **JOHNATHON BANKS**
Detroit, MI 18-0 (13)

Light Heavyweights
Weight Limit: 175 pounds

Champ: BERNARD HOPKINS
Philadelphia, PA 48-4-1 (32)

1. **ZSOLT ERDEI**
Hungary 28-0 (17)
2. **CLINTON WOODS**
England 41-3-1 (24)
3. **ANTONIO TARVER**
Orlando, FL 26-4 (19)
4. **GLEN JOHNSON**
Miami, FL 47-11-2 (32)
5. **CHAD DAWSON**
New Haven, CT 25-0 (17)
6. **DANNY GREEN**
Australia 25-3 (22)
7. **ROY JONES**
Pensacola, FL 52-4 (38)
8. **PAUL BRIGGS**
Australia 26-3 (18)
9. **JULIO GONZALEZ**
Huntington Beach, CA 41-4 (25)
10. **ADRIAN DIACONU**
Canada 24-0 (15)

Super Middleweights
Weight Limit: 168 pounds

Champ: JOE CALZAGHE
Wales 44-0 (32)

1. **MIKKEL KESSLER**
Denmark 39-1 (29)
2. **ANTHONY MUNDINE**
Australia 30-3 (23)
3. **LUCIAN BUTE**
Canada 21-0 (17)
4. **JEFF LACY**
St. Petersburg, FL 23-1 (17)
5. **LIBRADO ANDRADE**
Mexico 26-1 (20)
6. **CARL FROCH**
England 22-0 (18)
7. **ALLAN GREEN**
Tulsa, OK 26-1 (18)
8. **SAKIO BIKA**
Australia 25-3-2 (15)
9. **DENIS INKIN**
Germany 32-0 (24)
10. **EDISON MIRANDA**
Colombia 30-2 (26)

Middleweights
Weight Limit: 160 pounds

Champ: KELLY PAVLIK
Youngstown, OH 32-0 (29)

1. **ARTHUR ABRAHAM**
Germany 25-0 (20)
2. **WINKY WRIGHT**
St. Petersburg, FL 51-4-1 (25)
3. **JERMAIN TAYLOR**
Little Rock, AR 27-1-1 (17)
4. **FELIX STURM**
Germany 28-2-1 (12)
5. **JAVIER CASTILLEJO**
Spain 62-7 (42)
6. **SEBASTIAN SYLVESTER**
Germany 27-2 (13)
7. **AMIN ASIKAINEN**
Finland 22-1 (15)
8. **RANDY GRIFFIN**
Louisville, KY 24-1-3 (12)
9. **RAYMOND JOVAL**
Netherlands 37-4 (16)
10. **JOHN DUDDY**
Ireland 23-0 (17)

Welterweights
Weight Limit: 147 pounds

Champ: FLOYD MAYWEATHER
Grand Rapids, MI 39-0 (25)

1. **MIGUEL COTTO**
Puerto Rico 31-0 (25)
2. **PAUL WILLIAMS**
Augusta, GA 33-0 (24)
3. **SHANE MOSLEY**
Pomona, CA 44-5 (37)
4. **ANTONIO MARGARITO**
Mexico 35-5 (25)
5. **ZAB JUDAH**
Brooklyn, NY 36-5 (25)
6. **KERMIT CINTRON**
Reading, PA 29-1 (27)
7. **LUIS COLLAZO**
Queens, NY 28-3 (13)
8. **JOSHUA CLOTTEY**
Bronx, NY 33-2 (19)
9. **JACKSON BONSU**
Belgium 27-1 (23)
10. **OKTAY URKAL**
Germany 38-4 (12)

Jr. Welterweights
Weight Limit: 140 pounds

Champ: RICKY HATTON
England 43-1 (31)

1. **JUNIOR WITTER**
England 36-1-2 (21)
2. **PAUL MALIGNAGGI**
Brooklyn, NY 24-1 (5)
3. **GAVIN REES**
Wales 27-0 (13)
4. **VIVIAN HARRIS**
Brooklyn, NY 28-3-1 (18)
5. **SOULEYMANE M'BAYE**
France 36-2-1 (21)
6. **LOVEMORE NDOU**
Australia 46-9-1 (31)
7. **JUAN LAZCANO**
El Paso, TX 37-4-1 (27)
8. **DEMETRIUS HOPKINS**
Philadelphia, PA 28-0-1 (11)
9. **RICARDO TORRES**
Colombia, 32-1 (28)
10. **HERMAN NGOUDJO**
Canada 16-2 (9)

Lightweights
Weight Limit: 135 pounds

Champ: JOEL CASAMAYOR
Miami, FL 35-3-1 (21)

1. **JUAN DIAZ**
Houston, TX 33-0 (17)
2. **DAVID DIAZ**
Chicago, IL 33-1-1 (17)
3. **JOSE SANTA CRUZ**
Mexico 25-3 (14)
4. **JULIO DIAZ**
Coachella, CA 34-4 (25))
5. **NATE CAMPBELL**
Jacksonville, FL 31-5-1 (25)
6. **MICHAEL KATSIDIS**
Australia 23-0 (20)
7. **YURI ROMANOV**
Belarus 20-2 (13)
8. **AMIR KHAN**
England 15-0 (12)
9. **ZAHIR RAHEEM**
Las Vegas, NV 29-2 (17)
10. **ANTHONY PETERSON**
Washington, DC 26-0 (19)

Jr. Lightweights
Weight Limit: 130 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MANNY PACQUIAO**
Philippines 45-3-2 (35)
2. **JUAN MANUEL MARQUEZ**
Mexico 48-3-1 (35)
3. **JOAN GUZMAN**
Dominican Republic 28-0 (17)
4. **EDWIN VALERO**
Venezuela 23-0 (23)
5. **HUMBERTO SOTO**
Mexico 43-6-2 (27)
6. **JORGE BARRIOS**
Argentina 47-3-1 (34)
7. **ALEX ARTHUR**
Scotland 26-1 (19)
8. **YODSANAN NANTHACHAI**
Thailand 50-3-1 (39)
9. **MZONKE FANA**
South Africa 27-3 (10)
10. **CASSIUS BALOYI**
South Africa 34-3-1 (18)

Jr. Bantamweights
Weight Limit: 115 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **MARTIN CASTILLO**
Mexico 33-2 (17)
2. **ALEXANDER MUNOZ**
Venezuela 32-2 (27)
3. **NOBUO NASHIRO**
Japan 10-1 (6)
4. **CRISTIAN MIJARES**
Mexico 33-3-2 (14)
5. **FERNANDO MONTIEL**
Mexico 35-2-1 (26)
6. **JORGE ARCE**
Mexico 48-4-1 (37)
7. **DIMITRI KIRILOV**
Russia 29-3 (9)
8. **JOSE NAVARRO**
Los Angeles, CA 26-3 (12)
9. **Z GORRES**
Philippines 27-2-1 (15)
10. **VIC DARCHINYAN**
Australia 29-1 (23)

Flyweights
Weight Limit: 112 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **NONITO DONAIRE**
San Leandro, CA 19-1 (12)
2. **DAISUKE NAITO**
Japan 32-2-2 (20)
3. **PONGSAKLEK WONJONGKAM**
Thailand 67-3 (35)
4. **TAKEFUMI SAKATA**
Japan 31-4-2 (15)
5. **OMAR NARVAEZ**
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Japan 16-0 (11)
10. **WANDEE SINGWANCHA**
Thailand 54-8-1 (11)

Jr. Flyweights
Weight Limit: 108 pounds

Champ: IVAN CALDERON
Puerto Rico 30-0 (6)

1. **ULISES SOLIS**
Mexico 26-1-2 (20)
2. **HUGO CAZARES**
Mexico 25-4-1 (19)
3. **GIOVANNI SEGURA**
Bell Gardens, CA 18-0-1 (14)
4. **EDGAR SOSA**
Mexico 30-5 (16)
5. **OMAR NINO**
Mexico 24-2-1 (10)
6. **DANIEL REYES**
Colombia 39-5-1 (30)
7. **NELSON DIEPPA**
Puerto Rico 24-4-2 (13)
8. **OMAR SALADO**
Mexico 17-0-2 (9)
9. **BRAHIM ASLOUM**
France 23-2 (9)
10. **JUAN CARLOS REVECO**
Argentina 17-1 (8)

Strawweights
Weight Limit: 105 pounds

Champ: Vacant

1. **YUTAKA NIDA**
Japan 22-1-3 (8)
2. **FLORANTE CONDES**
Philippines 22-3-1 (20)
3. **OLEYDONG SITHSAMERCHAI**
Thailand 25-0 (9)
4. **EAGLE KYOWA**
Japan 18-2 (6)
5. **MUHAMMAD RACHMAN**
Indonesia 61-6-5 (31)
6. **KATSUNARI TAKAYAMA**
Japan 19-3 (8)
7. **ROMAN GONZALEZ**
Nicaragua 17-0 (16)
8. **DONNIE NIETES**
Philippines 22-1-3 (13)
9. **RODEL MAYOL**
Philippines 23-2 (18)
10. **OMAR SOTO**
Puerto Rico 13-1-1 (6)

By Jeff Ryan

Allow Me To Introduce Myself

In October, your fearless columnist will celebrate his 25th anniversary as a boxing journalist. It's my understanding that big things are planned for the occasion. A few of my colleagues have dropped hints about a tickertape parade past the magazine's editorial office, an engraved Rolex, and a testimonial dinner. Rumor has it that THE RING brass (not to be confused with the brass ring) would even like to retire my favorite writing T-shirt, the one that's covered with stains from the four major fast food groups and is full of more holes than the WBA's justification for its ratings.

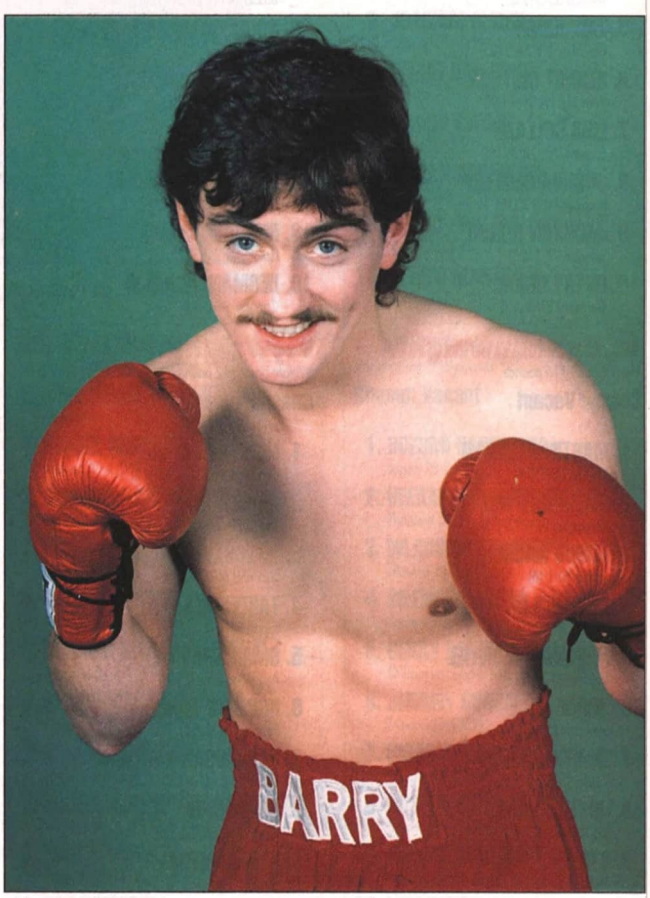
The BWAA has incurred the wrath of Ryan

The upcoming anniversary gets mention this month not because I'm sucking around for a card and present (movie theater gift certificates are nice, by the way), but because I was under the impression that I'd made somewhat of a name for myself in this industry while writing about everyone from Larry Holmes to Manny Pacquiao and every shootout from Hagler-Hearns to Mayweather-Hatton. Well, I've been disabused of that impression. Despite those 25 years (18 of them spent as a columnist for this magazine), my profile is apparently as diminished as Michael Jackson's after his 29th nose job, diminished, at least, in the eyes of the beloved Boxing Writers Association of America.

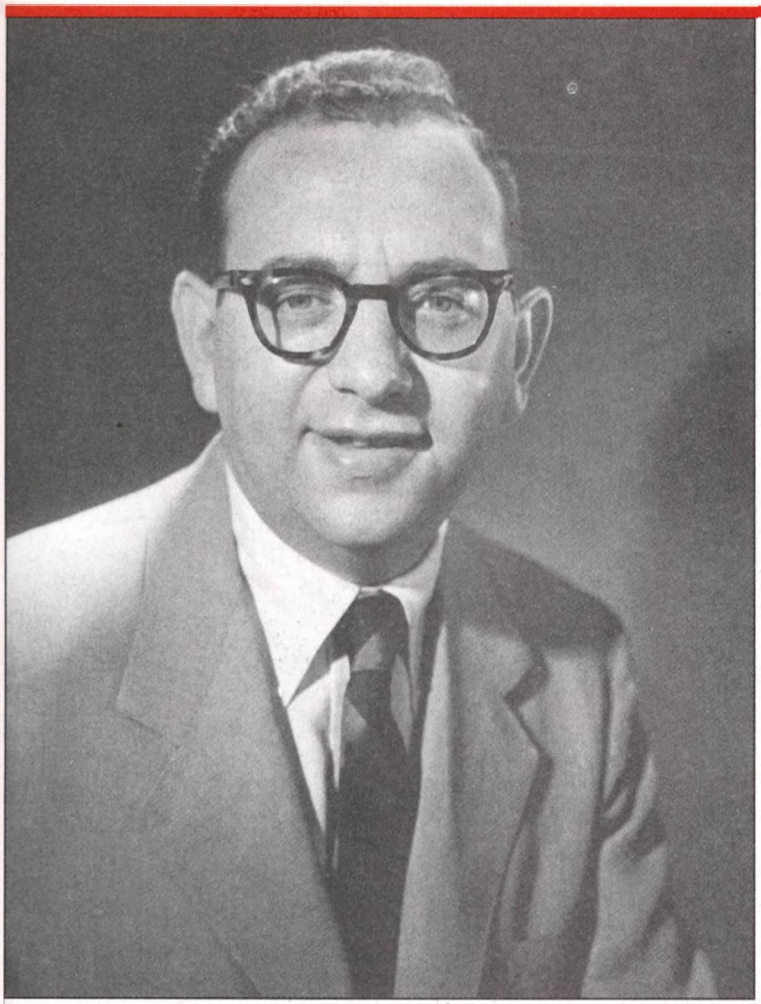
If there's one thing I've cherished throughout my career, and one word that best describes my attitude as a journalist, it's independence. There are a couple of reasons for this. First, writing is a very solitary pursuit. I've filed stories from a mobbed pressroom at the NBA Finals, where there are so many writers on duty that they literally rub elbows with each other while they're typing, yet felt as alone as Tom Hanks on that island in *Cast Away*. My deadline was *my* deadline, and nobody in the world could help me.

Second, I've never liked the idea of being part of a group, particularly when it came to digging out details as a reporter or expressing my views as a scribe. I don't want my opinions shaped, even subconsciously, by the thoughts of others. I've never shared quotes, revealed the secrets of my craft to fellow writers while tipping a few, or discussed story ideas with anyone but my editors. Nor do I participate in those telephone conference calls for fear that some clown from a daily paper will steal the quote I elicited from the interview subject, then run it before it can appear in my monthly magazine. I hate cliques and old boy networks, so it figures that I haven't been a member of the BWAA since sometime around 1984.

Recently, though, I decided to rejoin the organization in order to have a vote for the International Boxing Hall of Fame. I've told you why a Barry McGuigan doesn't belong in Canastota, but I never had a role in the selec-



Does McGuigan really belong in the IBHOF?



Ryan still recalls Nagler snub

tion process and felt that my participation was long overdue. So I sent an e-mail to Tom Hauser, the BWAA vice president in charge of membership, figuring he'd mail me some paperwork and instructions on how to pay my membership dues. Instead, I received a condescending e-mail, one informing me that I'd have to be reviewed by a six-member committee, answer a series of questions to the jury's satisfaction, and mail six samples of work that I'm "proud of having written" to Doogie Hauser himself so that, apparently, he could judge their worthiness. As though I was some blogger three days out of college.

I wish I was making this up. The questions were real pips. Since I wouldn't waste the electricity to log in and e-mail Doogie back, I'll answer his questions in print:

Q: How long have you been writing about boxing?

A: Uh, a quarter of a century.

Q: For whom do you write about boxing?

A: THE RING. You may have heard of it, Tom. It's even nicknamed "The Bible Of Boxing." My fight writing has also appeared in *Sports Illustrated*, *The Village Voice*, *Sport*, *Inside Sports*, *Newsday*, *Real Edge*, and others.

Q: Approximately how many byline articles have you written about boxing?

A: Hard to say. My guess is over 500. As for "Ryan Out Loud" columns, my calculation is about 215, give or take a few.

Q: How often, if at all, do you cover fights live at ringside?

A: As often as my schedule and logistics allow.

Q: Have you written any books about boxing?

A: No.

Q: Have any of your fight-related expenses been subsidized by a promoter, sanctioning body, manager, or other member of the boxing community?

A: Yeah, Don King paid for my two months of R & R in Tahiti last year. That's a joke, Tom. The answer is no.

Q: Are there any current BWAA members who you can list as references?

A: Probably a couple of dozen.

Q: What is your day job?

A: Three days a week I work as a mime for tips. The other four dangle from the cables of the Brooklyn Bridge while testing the wind speed for the Channel 11 weatherman. (Another joke, Tom. My day job is professional sportswriter.)

I share all of this with my readers so you can see what goes on behind the scenes in our business. Politics, egomania, and clueless boobs in positions of power are not limited to the alphabets and the television networks. Ironically, this overzealous vetting of a veteran journalist with a solid reputation is carried out by an organization that proudly boasts as one of its members, Ron Borges, a guy who was charged with *plagiarism* by *The Boston Globe*. While I'm sure the BWAA has a process for accepting new members, a little common sense is in order. You want to see articles I'm proud of having written? Pick up any issue of this magazine from the past 18 years. If I wasn't proud of something, it would have never been filed.

Shame on me for going against my better judgment and courting these guys. I should have reminded myself of my last attempt to seriously confer with the BWAA. It was back when I had just become a member and was still new to the business. I approached a group of veteran writers at a press conference to introduce myself. Holding court was BWAA President Barney Nagler, a dinosaur with a reputation as a giant in the field. Nagler shot me a death stare for having the nerve to approach his all-star team, looked me up and down and made a show of peering at my credential to see who the heck I was. Maybe the old man realized his skills had slipped by that point, and rather than welcome a new kid to the profession, he'd rather resent him. Who knows? Nagler, by the way, is a member of the IBHOF. Apparently, the building doesn't have a Nice Guy Wing.

My knees are a little sore these days and genuflecting is something I reserve only for the church pew. So goalkeeper Hauser and the BWAA won't get any smoke

Personal Perceptions:

The last word on everything from the airing of stupid commercials ad nauseum to the Wonder of it all:

• "Ridiculous" is the only way to describe the radio and television advertising for a pair of recent bouts. In plugging the Antonio Tarver-Danny Santiago showdown, Showtime's radio ads once again proclaimed Tarver a future Hall of Famer. (Excuse me, but he's hardly a lock.) Worse was the TV commercial that compared Roy Jones-Felix Trinidad to Ali-Frazier I.

• Why was Oscar De La Hoya talking about a match with the now-blemished Ricky Hatton? If the "Golden Boy" still wants to fight, he should dial Miguel Cotto and keep calling with the zeal of a dinnertime telemarketer until he gets a "yes."

• George Foreman was a guest speaker at a "wealth expo" held in New York a few months ago. You know, one of those you-too-can-be-rich-like-me pep talks. Presumably, Big George told his audience that the best thing anyone can do to be loaded like him one day is win the heavyweight title twice, pitch every product from snack chips to mufflers, and sign a multimillion-dollar deal to splash his or her name on a line of grills.

• Showtime Vice President Ken Hershman is hallucinating when he says junior welterweight Paulie Malignaggi is going to be a "great star for boxing." No guy who hits as softly as the Brooklynite is going to be a star. Malignaggi hasn't registered a stoppage in five years. If he keeps going the distance at his current rate, by the time he retires he should have a kayo percentage lower than Floyd Mayweather's body fat percentage.

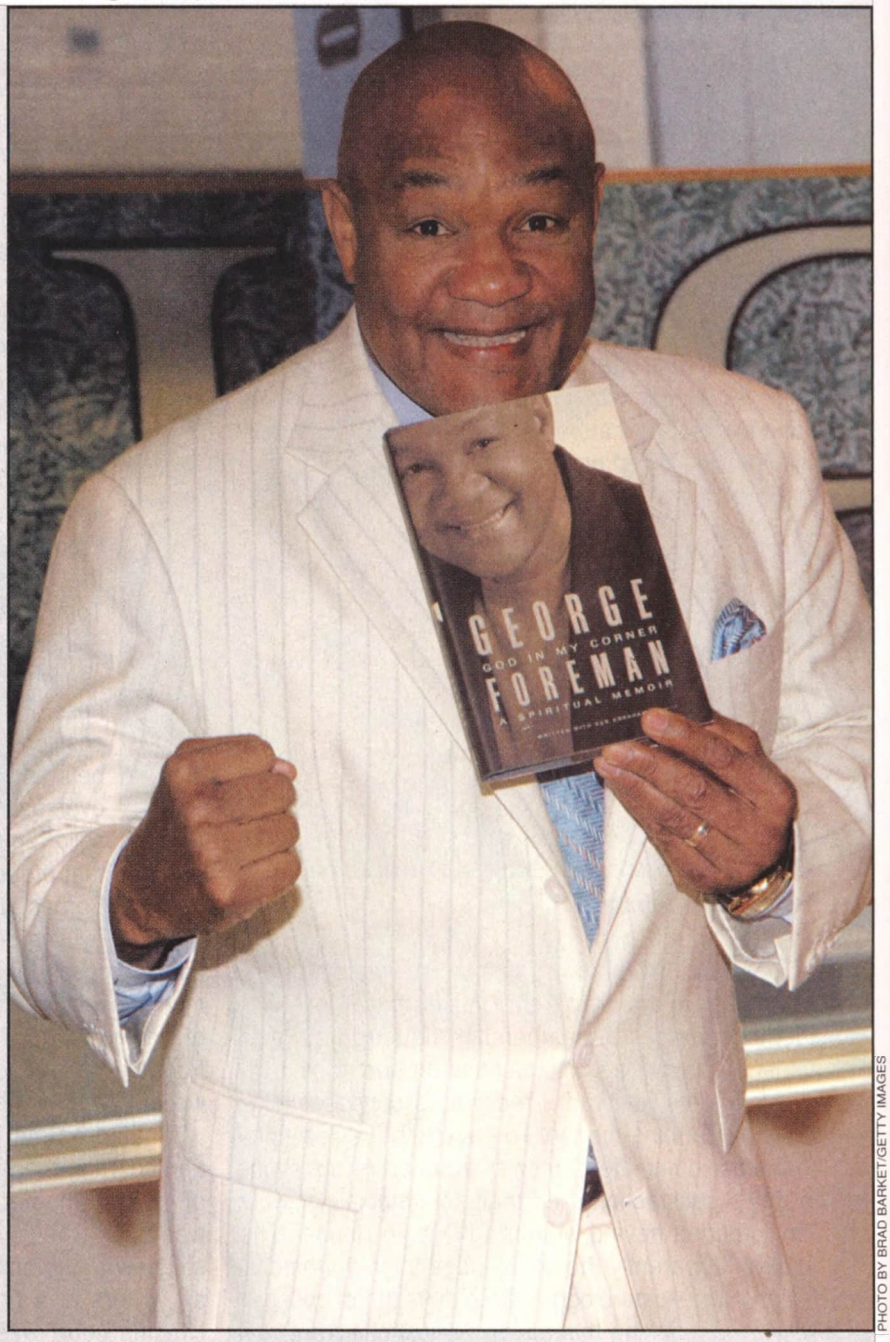


PHOTO BY BRAD BARKET/GETTY IMAGES

Big George flogs his latest book

• Stupid Observation of the Month: If actress Paz Vega married Vinny Paz, she'd be Paz Paz

• With his long braids, receding hairline, and sunglasses, doesn't Lennox Lewis seem to be morphing into Stevie Wonder?

blown up their asses by me. Preserve the sanctity of your fraternity, gentlemen. Keep it safe for the bloggers, the drunks, and the plagiarists. If I can manage to make a name for myself in this industry over the next 25 years, maybe I'll be worthy of your consideration.

Does HGH Mean No HOF?: Even though J. Ryan won't be helping determine who's worthy of enshrinement in Canastota, he'll be keeping close watch on the voting a few years hence. Specifically, when the names of Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, James Toney, Shane Mosley, and

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Will charges of steroid use keep Sugar Shane out of the Hall of Fame?

Fernando Vargas are up for discussion. (That's assuming, of course, that Holyfield does retire sometime before the next Ice Age buries us all under a giant glacier and renders the whole topic moot.)

The aforementioned five either tested positive for, or have been suspected of using, performance-enhancing drugs. Boxing, whose steroid problem is much less serious than that of baseball and football, has thus far not been faced with the dilemma of deciding if its cheaters should be judged for immortality simply on the basis of their achievements. Or if, like home run king Mark McGwire, they should be punished by having entry into their sport's hallowed hall delayed indefinitely.

PHOTO BY STUART FRANKLIN/GETTY IMAGES

It's unlikely that playing golf will make Wladimir a compelling figure

Complicating matters, just as it has when writers have speculated on the eventual candidacy of Barry Bonds, is the question of when exactly a short-cutter started using. If Toney, for instance, won multiple titles and beat a Hall of Famer (Mike McCallum) before turning to the laboratory for help, should that be all that matters? Or does juicing at *any* point in a guy's career render him unworthy of his game's highest honor?

Trying to make those determinations should have the voters desperately seeking a performance-enhancing substance of their own: Extra Strength Tylenol.

Wladimir Disputin': It's great to see that Wladimir Klitschko is determined to unify the alphabet crown, but he's deluding himself when he thinks the general public really cares. The last time a heavyweight title unification tournament generated any interest it was only because *Mike Tyson*, an unbeaten, pulverizing puncher with a menacing attitude, was the guy collecting the straps.

If the champ isn't a compelling figure, nobody gives a microsecond's thought to whether or not his title is undisputed. And as long as Russians with names the local sports anchor can't pronounce make up three-quarters of the semifinals, the mainstream will know less about the heavyweight tourney than it does about tennis' Qatar Open. ■

By Ivan Goldman

Juan Diaz: Unsung Collegian

Why do so many solid experts underestimate the terrier-like Juan Diaz, a man who's been quietly and efficiently cleaning out the lightweight division for years? (I use the word "quietly" in the figurative, not literal, sense because we've all heard the trademark Diaz grunt that accompanies each and every one of his punishing shots.)

In the rough, tough world of boxing, even knowledgeable minds dismiss a college kid who still lives with his parents. It just doesn't fit their preconceptions of what the fight world is all about. But look at the results—33-0 (17)—and his record's not padded with more than the usual percentage of stiffs. My own magazine has Diaz unlisted on its top 10 pound-for-pound list. I realize our ratings guys are waiting to see the outcome of his tussle with hot-and-cold-but-dangerous Nate Campbell on March 8 in Mexico, but Diaz deserved a ranking before then.

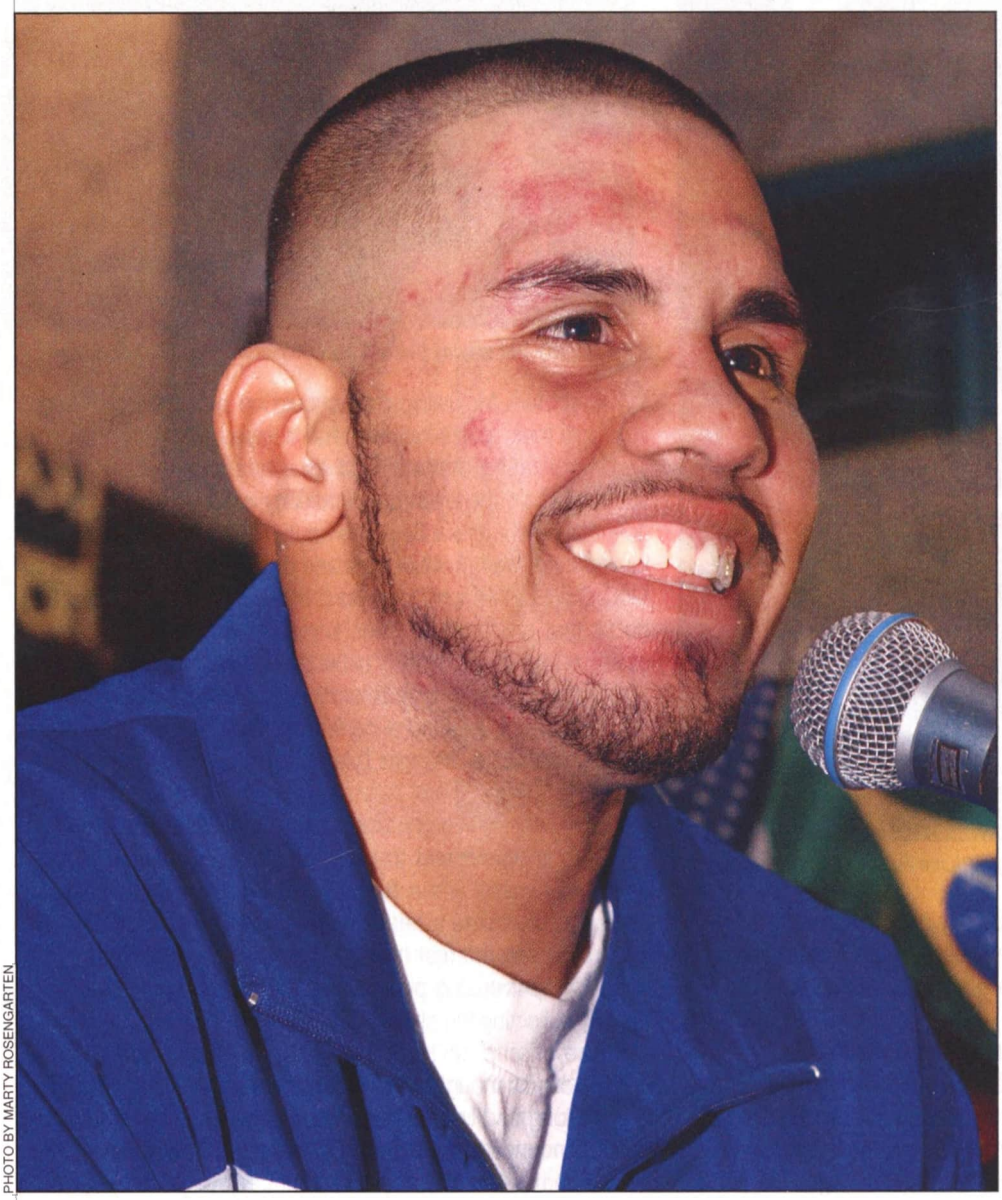


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Is Diaz underrated?

Meanwhile, sitting at number nine is faded middleweight Winky Wright. Yes, Winky has had a long and impressive career, but pound-for-pound ratings shouldn't be confused with Hall of Fame inductions. Winky hasn't stopped an opponent since 2002, and he was totally befuddled and battered in his last fight by ageless Bernard Hopkins. Winky is the classic aging lion cruelly driven into the jungle by a replacement. But in this case, an even older lion ejected him.

The tenacious Diaz always looks to me like a polished pro doing rounds on a heavybag, except he does it in a ring against a human being trying to hit him back. Diaz is a diesel-powered humanoid that just keeps banging the target with a steady, merciless intensity and frequency that breaks down opponents physically and emotionally. It's not always exciting,

because every round looks the same, but he deserves more recognition.

Though a bag can't counterpunch, it also can't quit. Opponents can and do. Before the contest they all see what looks like chinks in the Diaz armor. He doesn't have much of a knockout punch. Nor does he possess the kind of unpredictable Floyd Mayweather boxing artistry that would enable him to perform some shocking, unexpected maneuver in half an eye-blink. Instead, he angles for the same, predictable bodyshot distance, centered right on his man's nose. So fighters and their trainers figure, hey, take away his comfort zone, give him some angles, and this guy can be beat. But he won't let them get it done.

The way to take Diaz down is to punch big because if you don't connect with some heavy artillery, he will walk you down and maybe make you quit, even if you never quit before. If Campbell flunks the test, and I expect he will, possibly Michael Katsidis could solve this two-fisted puzzle. Then there's Jose Santa Cruz, who I don't think could do it, but after getting jobbed against Joel Casamayor, he deserves the opportunity. The best bet is probably one of those junior lightweight blast-o-matics, like Manny Pacquiao or Juan Manuel Marquez (who's been throwing harder lately). Yes, there's also head-crunching Edwin Valero, but if Valero can't get past a credible state commission, no, I don't think he should be competing.

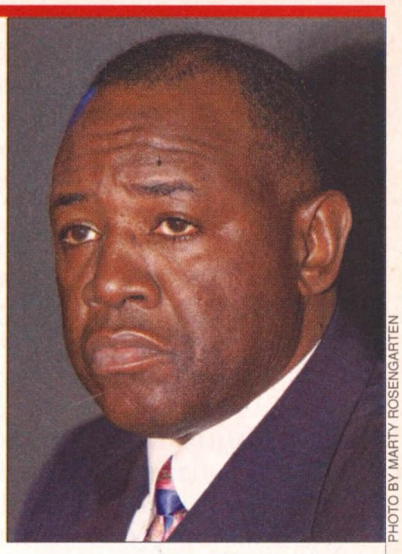


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Hey, Larry, Ivan is still waiting for your call

Brush With Hazzard: Fired New Jersey commissioner Larry Hazzard, who countered his dismissal with a lawsuit against the state's attorney general, is regularly praised by fight writers. But I wonder how many of them ever actually dealt with him? I suspect at least some of them are just repeating someone else's baseless conclusions.

Years ago, before I had this column, an L.A. heavyweight and his trainer went out to Atlantic City for a fight, won it, and came home with a $5,000 check that bounced. They asked me for help. My calls to the check-writing promoter resulted only in empty promises. That put the ball in the commission's court. Hazzard's deputy kept promising me Hazzard would do something (I could never get Hazzard on the phone despite many attempts). Meanwhile, the aide produced nothing but a lengthy run-around and more empty promises. No one in that office ever returned a call (or fax) as promised. But maybe the check's in the mail, along with Hazzard's legendary concern for fighters.

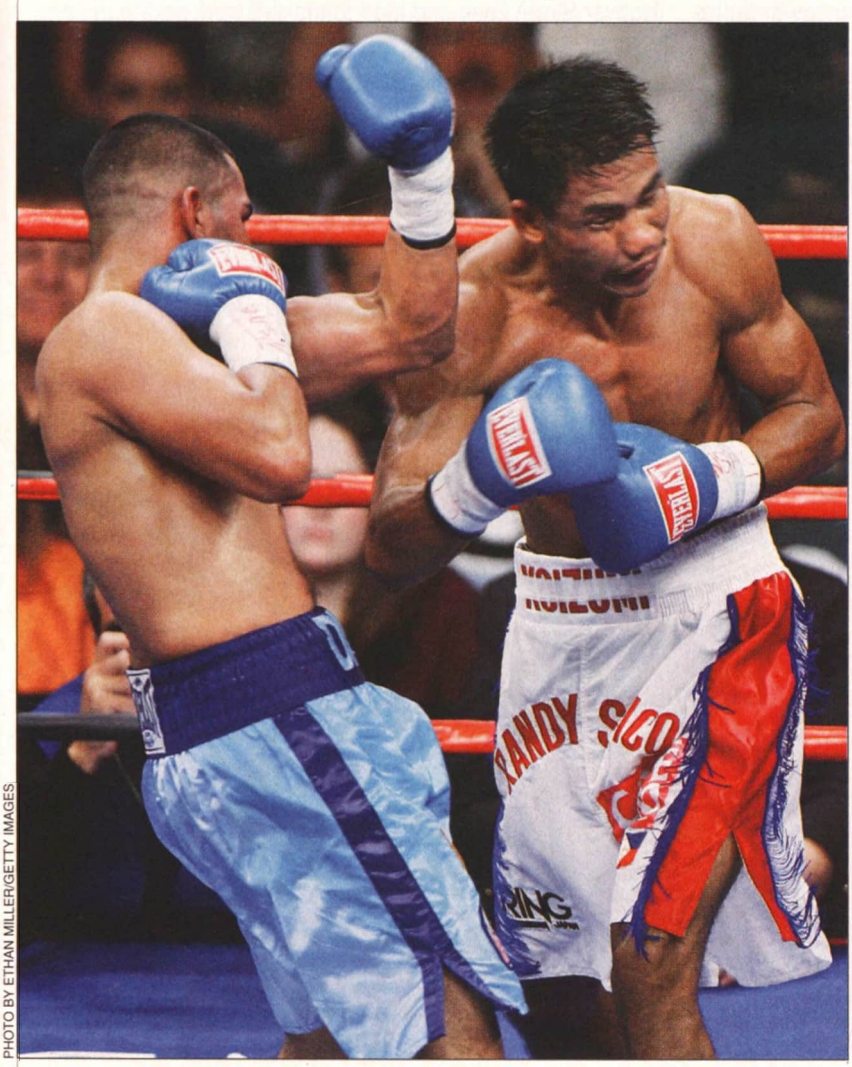


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Diaz rips Randy Suico with a left uppercut

Tickets Frenzy: Floyd Mayweather vs. Ricky Hatton was a stinker, according to Thomas Hauser of secondsout.com. He didn't mean the fight itself, but its ticket distribution process. Hauser reported that Golden Boy's Richard Schaefer told him 9,000 tickets, representing more than half the capacity of the MGM Grand Garden arena in Las Vegas, were split down the middle by the Hatton and Mayweather camps. These tickets, Hauser contended, were ultimately scalped.

Hatton's father, Ray Hatton, responding to the allegations, told Britain's *The Guardian* that his team bought and distributed 3,900 tickets, taking only enough

money off the top to pay for handling. To be fair, the Hatton team was faced with the nightmare of trying to allot seats for more than 40,000 British fans trying to pack themselves into a stadium that sold out at 16,459. Many Brits showed up without tickets and competed for seats at sold-out, closed-circuit showings.

Traditionally, fight camps make a little extra by caging more tickets than they need and selling the extras, but on a small scale. I'd hate to see boxing follow the ugly road of so many pop and rock spectacles whose tickets are dealt like marked cards.

PPV Injustice: Yes, Congress stared down the NFL when it tried to (gasp) withhold the big Patriots-Giants end-of-season telecast from fans outside New England. The league of fat-cat owners did this to pressure cable companies to pay confiscatory fees to the league's own cable network. When righteous Congress people raised the issue with the league—presto! The game was carried free not only locally, but by both CBS and NBC.

I've got nothing against free football on TV, but where's the congressional concern for fight fans? I haven't heard one peep out of Washington over outrageous $55 pay-per-view charges for big fights that—adding insult to injury—are accompanied by low-grade undercards. And 50 bucks for the Felix Trinidad-Roy Jones battle of the has-beens? I need to sit down.

Fighter Of Year: I was astonished when *Sports Illustrated* named Kelly Pavlik Fighter of the Year. This must mean the publication's editors knew fights were scheduled last year after all. On a more serious note, it seems everyone had a different candidate. They included Mayweather (THE RING choice), Miguel Cotto, Joe Calzaghe, and Pavlik. This was a positive development. Boxing had a great 2007, with plenty of action, and plenty of stunning career accomplishments.

Farewell: Los Angeles' Hoover Street Gym, deep in rough, hard-scrabble South-Central, shut down a year ago almost unnoticed. Muhammad Ali is just one of many world champions who worked out in the storied gym. Ken Norton headed there when he mustered out of the Marine Corps to turn pro.

The last owner, Jimmy Montoya, renamed it the Montoya Hoover Street Gym and tried to make it work on a budget so

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Mayweather-Hatton: A scalper's paradise?

slim the place went years without its own phone. Montoya just couldn't attract enough patrons to the neighborhood. The building, by necessity, was a fortress surrounded by a chain link fence topped with barbed wire.

"I used to support it myself," Montoya told me, using the gym mostly as a place to train his own fighters. But no longer a promoter or manager, he now works as a free-lance matchmaker, and when the lease expired, he packed his gear and walked away.

The *L.A. Times*, whose interest in boxing barely registers a pulse, never reported Hoover's passing, just as it never reported the closing of the L.A. Boxing Club a few years earlier—a huge, clean, often crowded, efficiently operated neighborhood institution that was bought and killed by a mega-church.

Magoo: Is there anyone quite so easy to rob as African fighters? They get little to no support from African-Americans or anyone else, and they're strangers in any lucrative venue. When you see an African get the short end of a decision, watch his face and you invariably see the same resigned reaction. He's thinking, well, getting robbed in (fill in the blank) beats baby-sitting goats back home or hawking Chinese junk on the streets of (fill in another blank).

I saw that look again when tough, flashy Paulie Malinaggi of Brooklyn glided past Herman Ngoudjo of Cameroon by scores of 117-111, 116-113, and 115-113 in Atlantic City. It was a close, back-and-forth fight, with Paulie's slickness often confounded by an opponent who sneaked in harder shots. I felt I had it right at 114-114 off Showtime, but any close scores would have satisfied me. My colleague, Joe Santoliquito, also had it 114-114 from ringside.

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Pavlik had a big year in 2007

Hey, I like Paulie too. How can you dislike a fighter with a great jab, a personality, and tons of courage? I just don't think he won. Certainly not by any overwhelming margin. Only one Magoo, though, to judge Al Bennett, who scored a measly three rounds for Ngoudjo. Get serious. ■

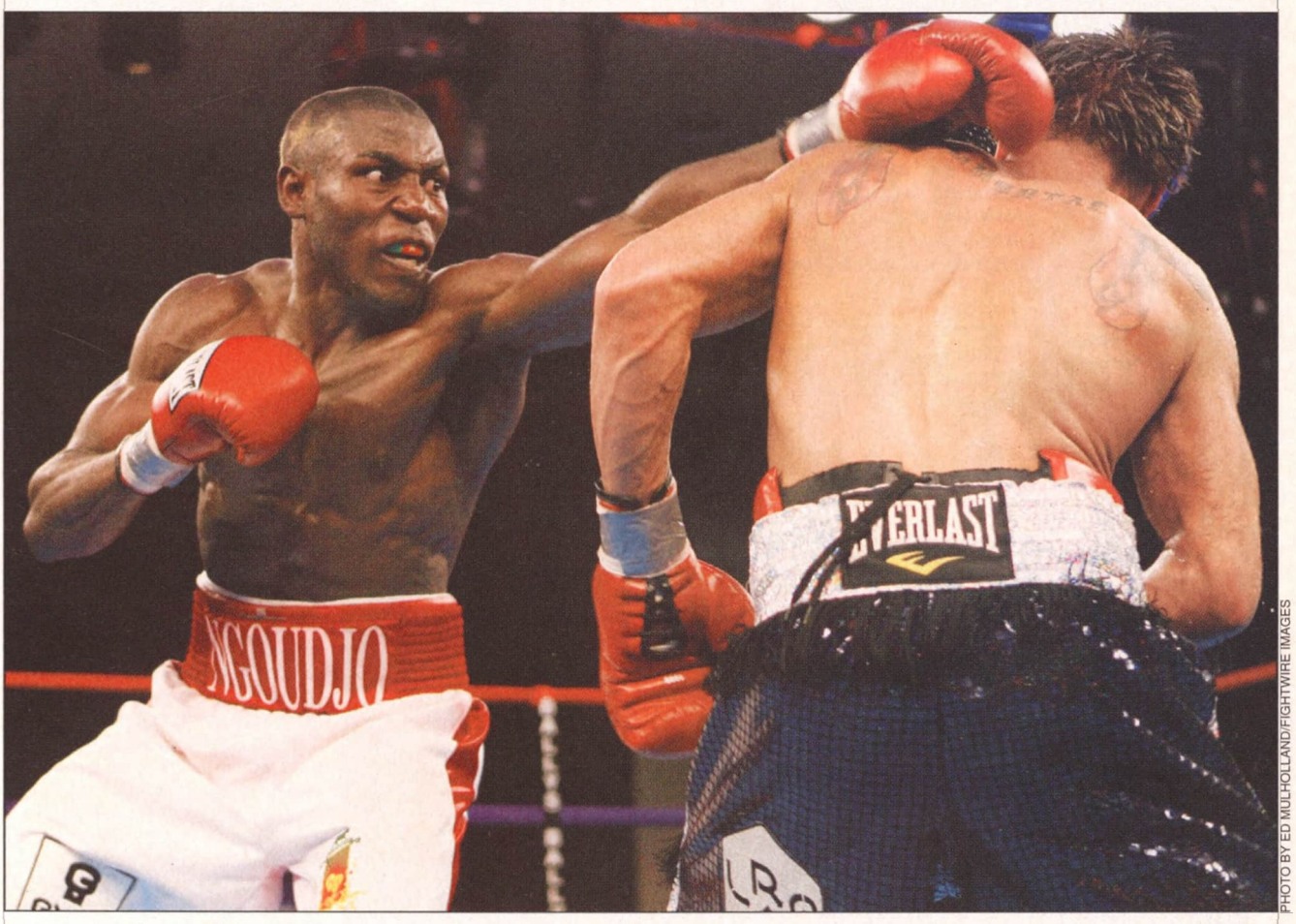


PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Malignaggi didn't slip all of Ngoudjo's punches

Camera Clicks

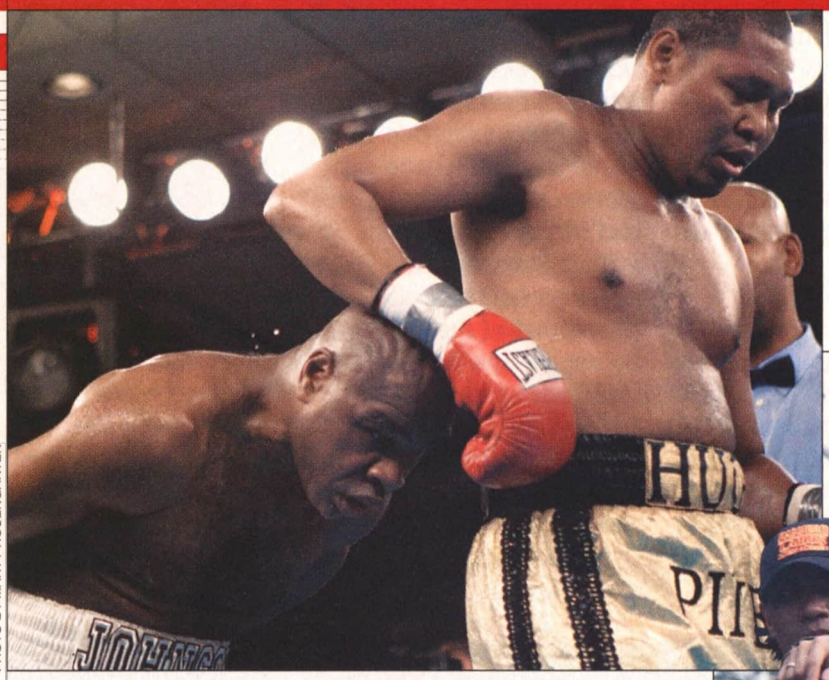


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

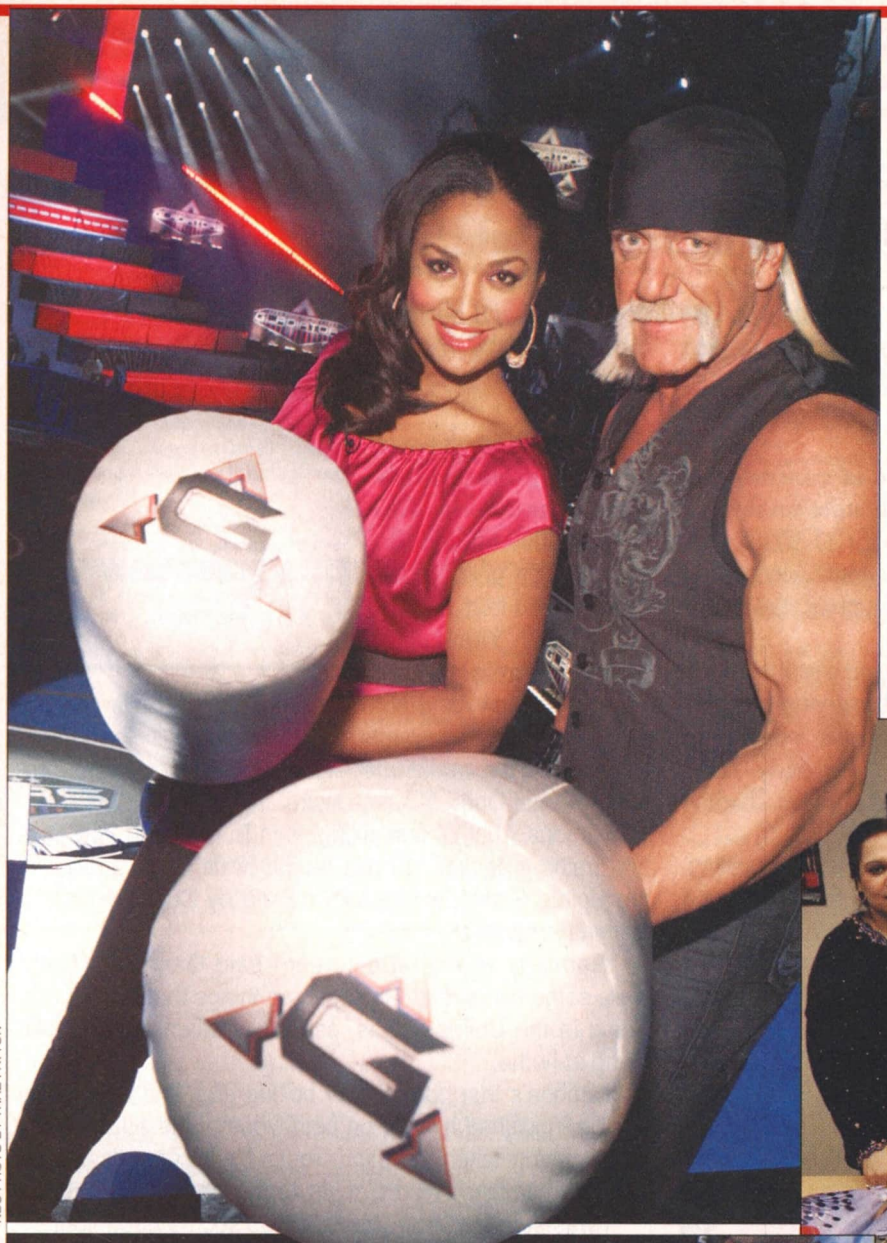
Floyd Mayweather was the latest boxer to appear on Dancing With The Stars, *but he has nothing on Glen Johnson and Hugo Pineda when it comes to conga line skills. If you like this, wait until you get a load of their synchronization on the Electric Slide.*

PHOTO BY JES AZNAR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

You knew there was a new Rambo movie coming out ... you just didn't realize Manny Pacquiao had replaced Sylvester Stallone in the title role. Okay, so "Pac-Man" isn't playing Rambo. But he does do some acting on the side, and here the Filipino hero greets fans at the start of the Metro Manila Film Festival. (And our sources in the Philippines say he already has better dramatic chops than Sly.)

PHOTO BY ANDREW H. WALKER/GETTY IMAGES

Nothing personal, Joe Frazier, but you're by far the least "smokin'" individual in this photo. Not only that, but Frazier, who's by no means a short man, is giving up about four inches in height to each of these towering models (from left, Camilla Thorsson, Jennifer Ohlsson, and Tarah Rodgers). Fortunately for the former heavyweight champ, none of these lovely ladies are using their long arms to keep him at a distance.



NBC PHOTO BY TRAE PATTON

No, this is not the poster hyping the main event of WrestleMania 24. (At least we hope it isn't.) Laila Ali and Hulk Hogan are the co-hosts of the new American Gladiators *on NBC. Laila's finding the experience of sharing the screen with a famous pro wrestler much more enjoyable than her father did, since thus far the Hulkster hasn't lied down on his back and kicked her repeatedly in the shins.*

Showing that Khan-do attitude we all love, British mega-prospect Amir Khan recently opened the Gloves Community Center in Bolton, England, which will provide local kids with affordable access to boxing training and fitness facilities. Normally, Khan would have asked his parents and sister to stay home, but since he got caught speeding and temporarily lost his driver's license a few days before the center's opening, he needed Mom and Dad to give him a lift.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

PHOTO BY JAVIEL CENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

David Banks' boxing career got thrown off-course by a right hand from Edison Miranda that left him in this most uncomfortable position, but the good news is that he has a bright future in limbo competitions. Here's hoping Banks' health insurance covers chiropractic work.

By Robert Cassidy

Yuriorkis Gamboa Junior Lightweight

In Fidel Castro's Cuba, they fight for medals, pride, and country. The only boxing that exists on the island is that of the amateur variety and an Olympic gold medal is the kind of currency that can drastically elevate one's status.

But it rarely translates into the kind of currency that matters most. That is why 2004 Olympic champion Yuriorkis Gamboa sold his gold medal for $1,500 on the black market in Havana. Without that modest windfall, he wouldn't have been able to throw his daughter, Brenda, a first birthday party.

"For me, the most important thing in my life is my daughter and I wanted to give her a deserving birthday party," said Gamboa, speaking through his interpreter, Tony Gonzalez. "Not just a regular birthday party, but a birthday deserving of the daughter of an Olympic champion. That's why I sold it. I did it for her."

The medal may be gone, but Gamboa's future seems better than ever. Amateur boxers talk about the intimidation factor when facing Cubans, and the 26-year-old Gamboa is the embodiment of that spirit. He fights expecting to win every second of every round. The junior lightweight is fast and strong, and perhaps most troubling for his opponents, he is relentless.

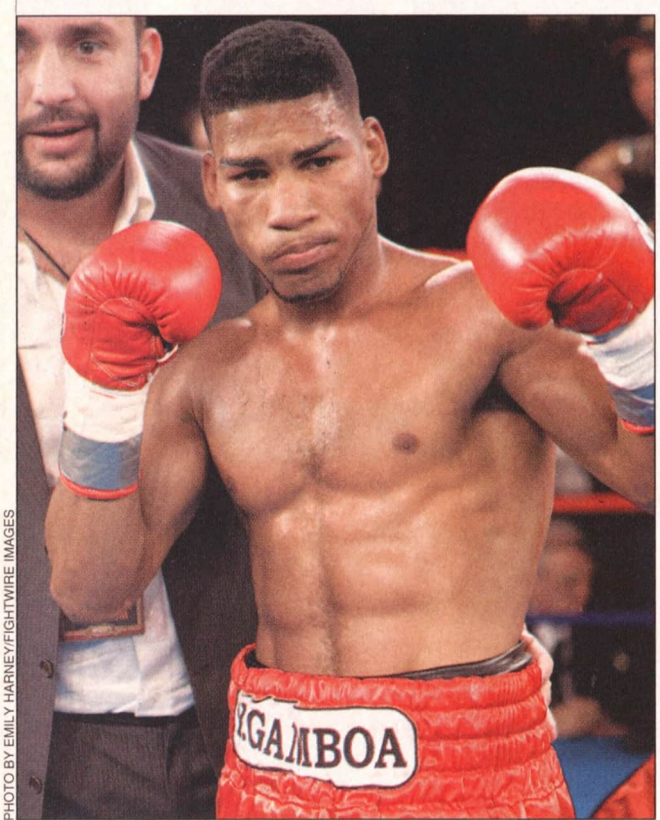


PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Pro Record

2007		
April 27	Alexan Manvelyan, Hamburg, Germany	W 4
June 16	Araik Sachastian, Ankara, Turkey	KO 4
July 6	Joel Sebastian Mayo, Hamburg	KO 2
Sept. 2	Thomas Hengstberger, Berlin, Germany	KO 1
Sept. 21	Nestor Paniagua, Schleswig-Holstein, Germany	KO 1
Oct. 19	Samuel Kebede, Berlin	KO 2
Oct. 30	Adalton DeJesus, Hollywood, FL	KO 6
2008		
Jan. 5	Gilberto Luque, Atlantic City, NJ	KO 1

FIGHTS	WON	LOST	DRAW	KOs
8	8	0	0	7

The world is able see him fight professionally now because in December 2006 he and two other Cuban gold medalists defected from a training camp in Venezuela. Gamboa, bantamweight Yan Barthelemy, and heavyweight Odlanier Solis crossed into Colombia and sought political asylum in the United States. The trio would later sign with Germany-based promoter Ahmet Oner, of Arena Box.

Gamboa won his first six fights in Europe and now lives and trains in Miami. He has fought twice since arriving in the United States, where he's trained by Cuban-American Osmiri Fernandez.

"Germany was a bit different," said Gamboa. "There were some things that I liked, some things that I didn't like. Being in the United States, especially Miami, is a lot like being at home."

Gamboa's true home is the boxing ring, and thus far he has distinguished himself on both sides of the Atlantic, and he has hardly taken a cautious route. He is currently 8-0 (7), while the combined record of his opponents is 133-28-5.

"I was surprised that Gamboa was such a good fighter," said Oner. "I knew they were all good fighters, but Gamboa has progressed very quickly. He was the most ready for the transition from amateur to pro. He's the one people are talking about, the one people want to see."

Here's why: While still in Germany, he knocked out Joel Sebastian Mayo, who was 40-11 (25) and had gone 12 rounds on five occasions. That was Gamboa's *third* pro fight. In his sixth fight, he knocked out Samuel Kebede, who was 25-1 (14) and had challenged for an alphabet title.

When he came to the United States, Gamboa fought Adailton DeJesus, who was 19-2 (17) and was two fights removed from a WBA title-fight eliminator.

"When Amed told me we were fighting DeJesus," said Gonzalez, who also serves as manager, "I knew exactly who he was because I was there when he lost a close decision to Roinet Caballero in the eliminator. I thought maybe we're pushing the envelope too much."

Any fear subsided immediately. Gamboa dropped

(Continued on Page 122)

BACK ISSUES OF BOXING 88/2005

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LEGACY IN THE BALANCE!

5 Things Mayweather Must Do Before He's Through

By William Dettloff

In the moments following his dramatic stoppage of Ricky Hatton, Floyd Mayweather said he'd become "bored" with boxing and, if he didn't retire, which was a possibility, he would at the least take a very long vacation.

You'll forgive us for not buying it. Mayweather claimed after his win over Oscar De La Hoya that he was retiring and before we knew it, he'd

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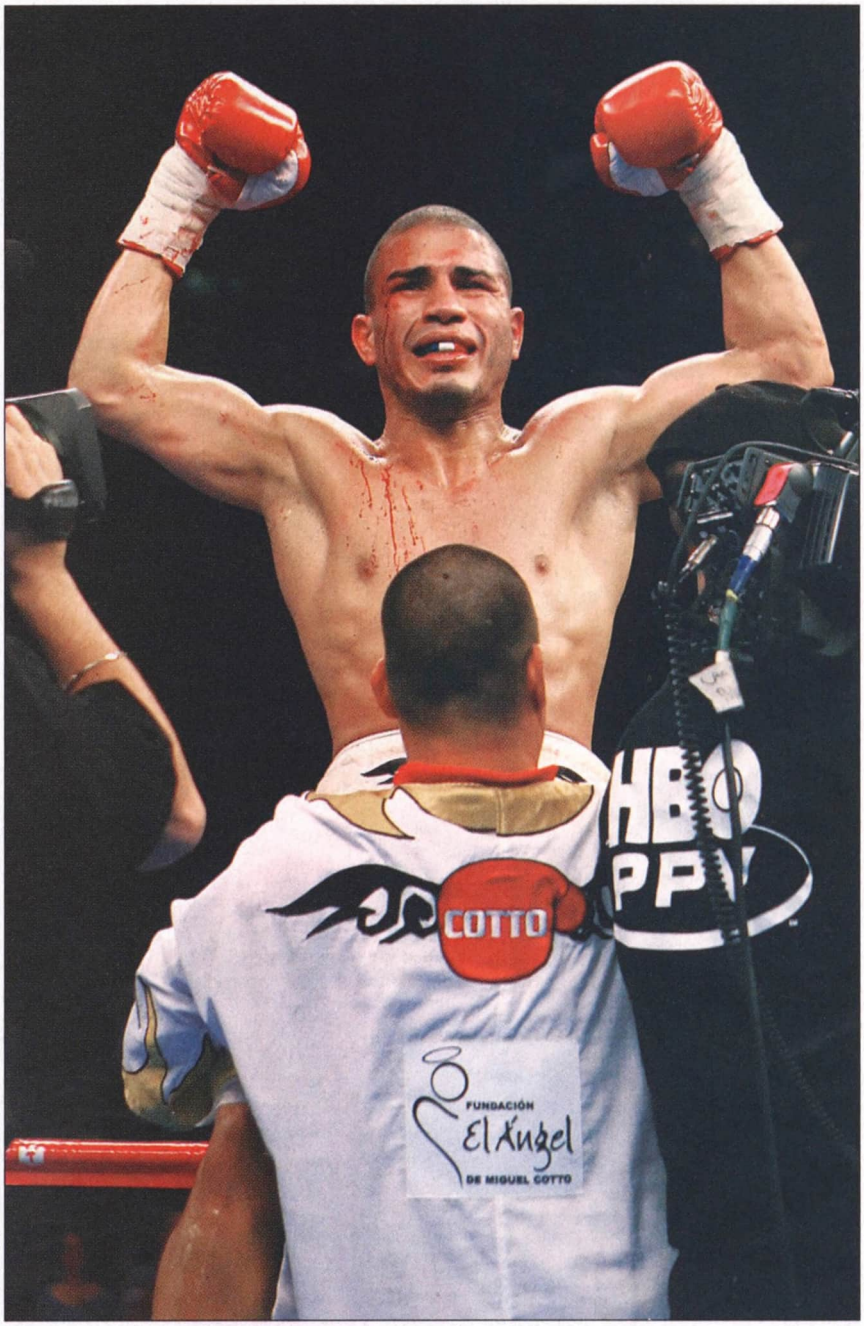

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Mayweather's supremacy at 147 pounds is being challenged by THE RING's number-one contender, Miguel Cotto, pictured celebrating his November 2007 decision over Shane Mosley. A victory over the undefeated Puerto Rican would be much more significant than "Pretty Boy's" previous welterweight wins.

signed to face Hatton. Also, 30-year-old undefeated stars at the top of their game do not retire from boxing or take exceptionally long vacations; there's too much money to be made and too much to accomplish.

That's not to say it would be a bad thing if he did. Mayweather getting out now or in the near future and staying out would be the ultimate happy ending, the rarest of occurrences in boxing. But doing so would require that he obtain a certain peace of mind and satisfaction with his career that we think perhaps is not yet warranted. There are some things that in our view Mayweather must prove about himself before he is through, especially if he wants us to believe, as he clearly does, that he is among the greatest fighters ever. Here are five of them:

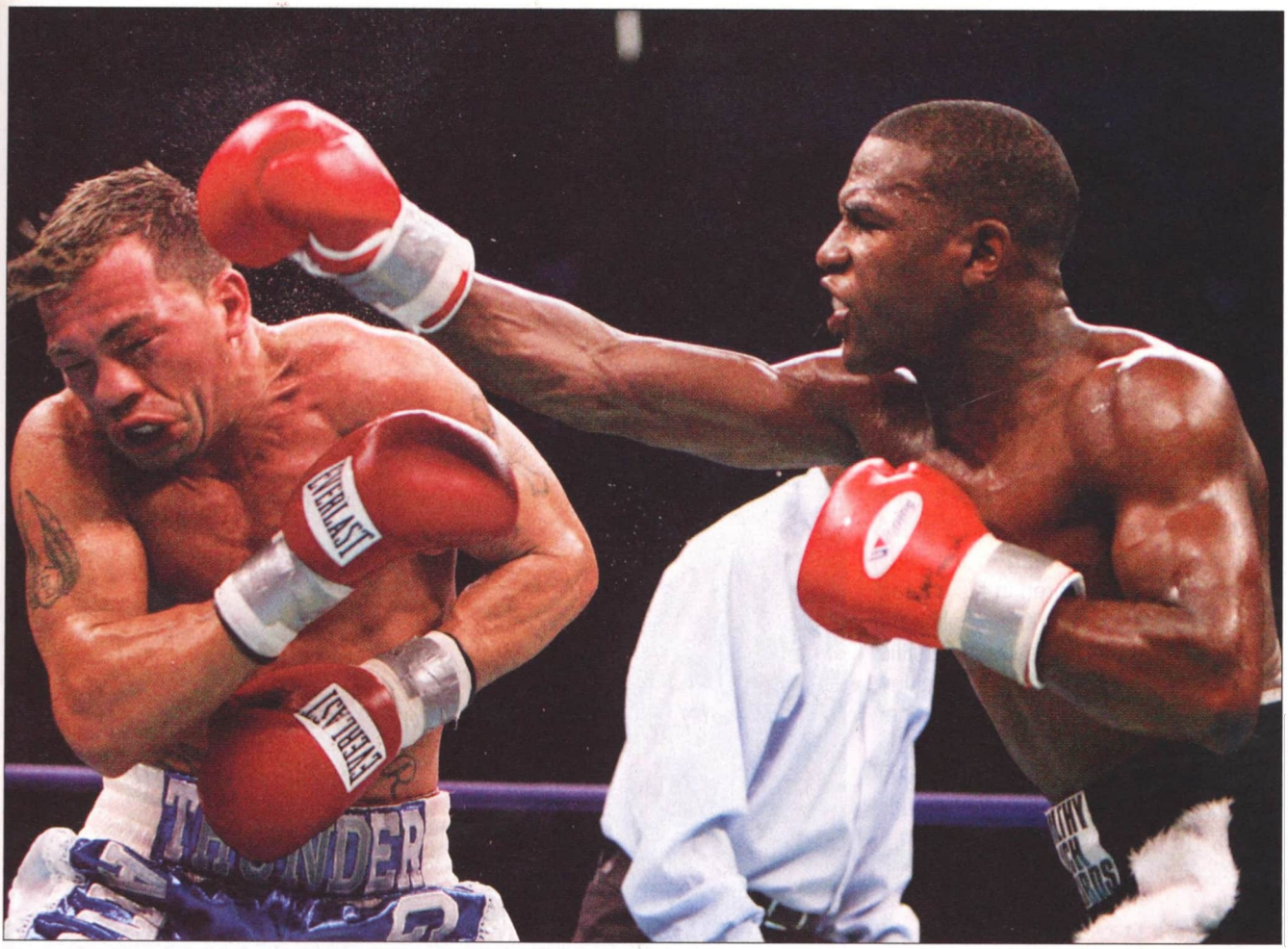
THAT HE'S RIGHT NOW THE BEST WELTERWEIGHT IN THE WORLD:

When you look at things closely, you see that it's rare that any champion is for very long the best fighter in his division. If he were, he'd never get dethroned. That's how titles change hands—a challenger proves he's better by whipping the champion (at least, that's the way it's supposed to work). You could make the case, as Mayweather did very clearly following his win over Hatton, that no one at 147 has done as much as he has and that he's accomplished everything he wanted to, and then some. So why should he stick around?

It's a boxing truism also that there always will be another challenger claiming to be ducked, always some young buck aiming to knock off the champion. That's the nature of the game. No champion stays around forever (they do try though, don't they?). Nor should he be required to hang on until he has nothing left just to prove himself worthy. Any athlete is free to leave the sport on his own terms, especially one who is as accomplished as Mayweather.

Still, there is legitimate reason to question Mayweather's absolute superiority at 147 pounds. Let's face it; his two gigantic recent wins came over Oscar De La Hoya, a semi-retired, well past-his-prime junior middleweight whom he barely edged, and Hatton, the junior welterweight champion whose sole previous effort at 147 exposed his difficulty dealing with fighters at that weight. That is not a welterweight Murderer's Row. Mayweather has defeated exactly two top welterweights: Zab Judah and Carlos Baldomir, two significantly flawed guys whose weaknesses were known going in, and who have accomplished next to nothing since losing to Mayweather.

So whom must Mayweather face? It's no secret: Miguel Cotto. There's not a more qualified welterweight challenger, nor one who's more deserving than Cotto, THE RING's top welterweight contender. Cotto's undefeated record isn't made up of stiffs and carefully selected opponents. He's been fighting higher-quality guys since very early on, and as he showed while beating Shane Mosley in November, he is the



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If Mayweather would attack the majority of his opponents the same way he did Arturo Gatti in June 2005, he would be a far more exciting fighter and silence critics who claim most of his fights are boring due to Floyd's peck-and-move tactics.

genuine article. There is very little he cannot do in the ring.

Because Mayweather has been so good at so many different weights—junior lightweight all the way up to welterweight—it's hard to deny his spot at the top of the pound-for-pound list. And there's no question he's the legitimate world welterweight champion. But until he faces and defeats Cotto, his claim to be the absolute best at 147 is unproved. He is obligated to try to prove it.

THAT HE CAN STILL BE AS EXCITING AS HE IS GOOD:

Mayweather rightly got a lot of credit for taking out Hatton in the 10th after flooring him, and for standing still and hurting him a couple of times in the middle rounds. The question is what was he doing over the first half of the fight? Answer: boxing very, very cautiously. That's the way he rolls these days, and it's the way he's rolled for a while now. His win over De La Hoya couldn't have been more cautiously fought if he were doing battle in a minefield. Even against Carlos Baldomir—*Carlos Baldomir*!—he was spectacularly cautious, though he held about every physical advantage one fighter could hold over another. It's true he stopped Hatton, but not because he walked him down and out-banged him. He nailed him on the way in with a counter left hook. There's a difference.

Now, we love a good scientific, classical boxer as much as anyone and it's a pleasure to see a guy do in the ring the things Mayweather does. In a sense, he was a joy to watch even against Baldomir. But he did those special things at lightweight and junior lightweight and sometimes even at 140. And then he stood still and let his hands go. The safety-first fighter who pecked through the first half of both the De La Hoya and Hatton fights bore little resemblance, from an offensive standpoint, to the guy that blasted out Diego Corrales or even to the one that brutalized Arturo Gatti.

Mayweather talked about his changed mindset during *Mayweather/Hatton 24/7*, about how, now that he is older and a father, he worries about his long-term health and other such things that did not concern him when he was young, unencumbered by family responsibilities, and poor. Being older, a father, and wealthy can change a man, even a prizefighter. And it's true that Mayweather has moved up in weight and is facing bigger, stronger fighters. That changes a fighter too—ask Roy Jones (more on that a little later). But Hatton was the smaller man in Las Vegas, and is not

considered a huge puncher even at 140. That we were well into the fight's second half before Mayweather stepped forward and asserted himself seems, in retrospect, a bit silly. He is a better, more exciting fighter than that if he wants to be.

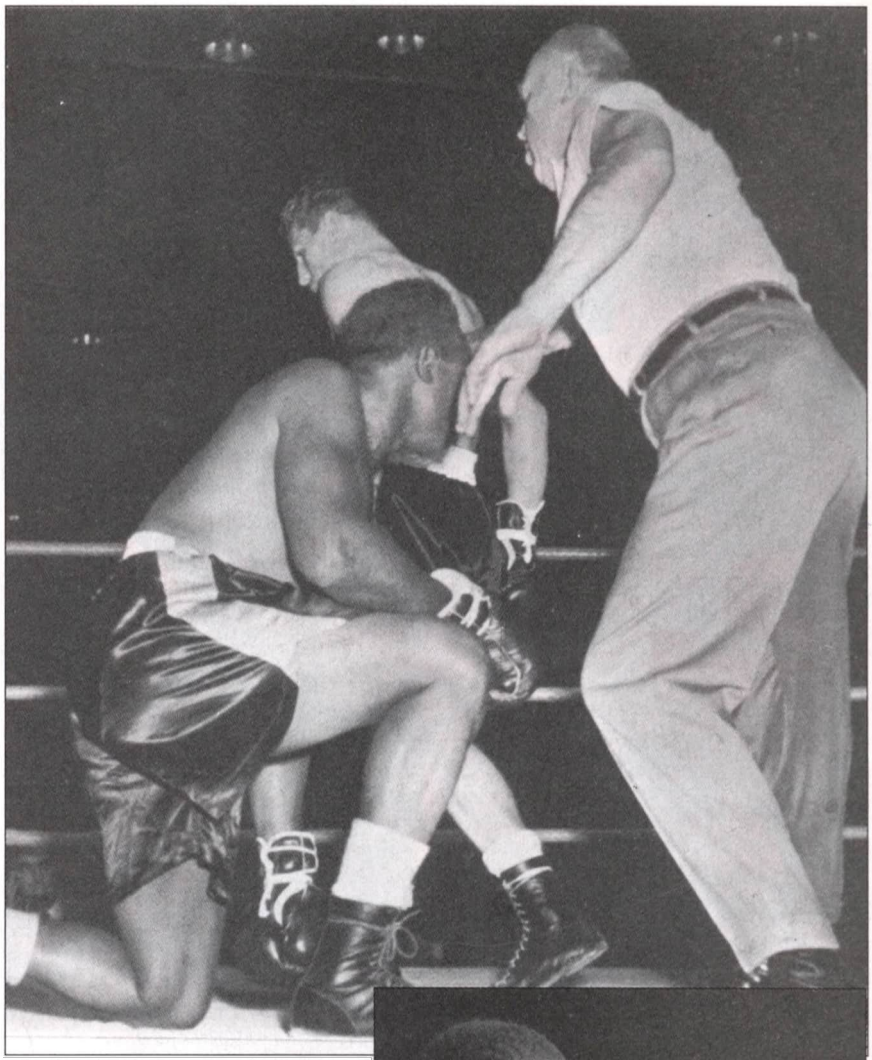
THAT HE CAN OVERCOME REAL ADVERSITY:

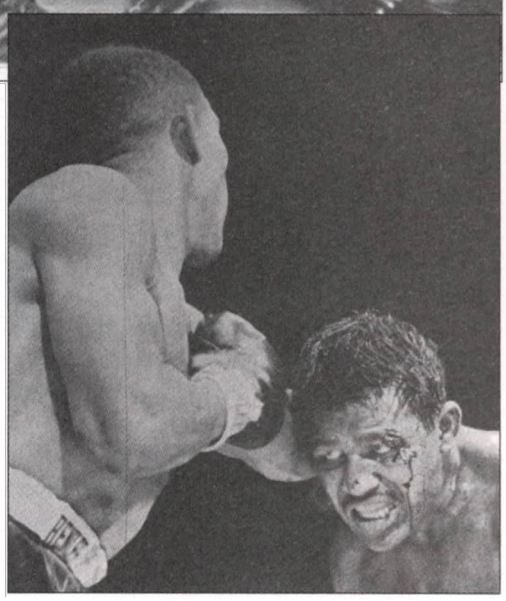
Everyone remembers that moment during Mayweather's May 2001 title defense against Carlos Hernandez, when Mayweather landed a punch that caused his hand so much pain he doubled over and brushed a glove on the canvas, resulting in the only knockdown he's suffered in his career. We remember too the reasonably hard time he had against Jose Luis Castillo in their first fight, and also his exciting win over Emanuel Augustus in October 2000, which Mayweather has called the toughest fight of his career. If you like, you can even throw in the early rounds of his win over De La Hoya, when it looked like De La Hoya might pull off the upset. None of those instances qualifies as the kind of adversity we speak of here, which is the kind any great fighter must overcome to justify his being called great.

We're talking about, for instance, the kind Pernell Whitaker overcame when, past his best days, well behind on points, and never a big puncher, he roared back to stop awkward Diosbelys Hurtado in the 11th round. Or the kind Julio Cesar Chavez overcame when he stopped Meldrick Taylor in the 12th round in The Fight of the 1990s.

That's the stuff that makes a great fighter great: Archie Moore climbing off the floor to knock out Yvon Durelle; Larry Holmes coming back to stop Earnie Shavers (and Renaldo Snipes too) after having been knocked stiff; Ray Leonard (whom Mayweather has publicly derided) stopping Tommy Hearns in their first fight, or Sugar Ray Robinson knocking out Randy Turpin. The great fighters do that kind of thing, some of them more than once.

Certainly Mayweather would laugh at the notion that he'd have to get busted up or floored to prove his greatness. He knows the ability to come back from a bad cut or a knockdown or some other injury isn't the only thing that makes a fighter great. If it was, Matthew Saad Muhammad, Danny Lopez, and Arturo Gatti might be numbers one, two, and three all-time. Indeed, if you're great, you don't face that much adversity; you're better than everyone else, otherwise you wouldn't be great. But any fighter can look perfect when everything is going his way. Think Mike Tyson until Buster Douglas came along. Or the young George Foreman until Zaire.





One of the benchmarks of greatness is a fighter's ability to overcome adversity, as illustrated by Archie Moore coming off the deck four times to stop Yvon Durelle (above) and Ray Robinson battling through the blood to regain the middleweight title from Randy Turpin (right). Mayweather has yet to face such hardship.

Mayweather has had some nagging injuries, particularly to his hands, and we would imagine that in his mind his ability to win despite his various aches and pains render him super human. This is not unlike when Shannon Briggs claimed he was the best fighter ever because he once won the heavyweight title "with

PHOTO BY TEDDY BLACKBURN

When he was in his prime, Roy Jones wasted a lot of time fighting no-hopers such as New York City police officer Rick Frazier (left). Mismatches such as this did absolutely nothing to enhance Jones' legacy.

a disease" (his alleged asthma). It's not the same as willing yourself to a win the way great fighters do. It's not even close. Theoretically, every fighter wants to go through his entire career without having to dig very deep. The great ones make it so that eventually, they have to.

THAT HE IS NOT ROY JONES:

Mayweather's victory over Hatton was his 39th as a pro. Jones' 39th win was a 10th-round stoppage of Otis Grant. Jones was 29 years old, the light heavyweight world champion, the consensus best pound-for-pound fighter in the game, and at the peak of his powers. He followed the win over Grant not with a superfight, but with a desultory second-round stoppage of Rick Frazier. Then came wins over Reggie Johnson, David Telesco, and Richard Hall, decent fighters each, but Jones could have been doing so much more with what he had.

Now that Jones doesn't really have it anymore, he wishes he had done more, we suspect, but he chose then to milk HBO for what he could while padding his bank account against average opposition in safe fights. Was he smart to play it that way? We're sure it seemed like it then. But how does it look now, his shaky legacy shattered by Antonio Tarver and Glen Johnson? Today, Jones is reduced to peddling his fight with a used-up Felix Trinidad as though it was he against Nigel Benn circa 1997, and begging Joe Calzaghe for a fight in Wales. For all his otherworldly skills, Jones is recalled by many today as a guy who played it safe when he didn't have to because he wanted to be a businessman—or a basketball player or a rap star—more than he wanted to be a fighter.

Mayweather's recent fights have not been about cementing his legacy as a prizefighter or about creating superfights, at least not fights that are super because one doesn't know going in who will win. Through the power of excellent matchmaking and promotion, his victories over De La Hoya and Hatton produced super-sized paychecks and pay-per-view numbers and were super events, but not superfights. And anyone who was paying attention knew that would be the case going in. Like Jones, he has dedicated himself to getting wealthier and bigger and to diversifying his

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PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Since beating Oscar De La Hoya, Mayweather's celebrity status has been on the rise. But appearing on* Dancing With The Stars *and being invited to the grand opening of the LAX Nightclub at the Luxor doesn't necessarily mean he can draw big pay-per-view numbers against opponents not as popular as "The Golden Boy" and Ricky Hatton.

business portfolio. Despite his obvious talent as a fighter and a frequently voiced desire to be recognized as one of the great ones, he is not doing the things great prizefighters do. He is doing the things successful businessmen do.

If that's what "Money Mayweather" wants to do, that's his prerogative. Fighters fight, in large part, to make money. But if he wants to back up his boasts, he must prove that, unlike Jones, he's still more prizefighter than promoter, more boxer than reality show contestant. How does he do that? He fights top guys. No, they won't all make him $25- or $30-million, but fights against deserving guys can still make him seven figures if they're done right. Fighting and beating Miguel Cotto or Antonio Margarito or Paul Williams or Kermit Cintron and maybe Junior Witter would go a long way toward proving Mayweather's not his era's Roy Jones, but his era's Ray Robinson.

THAT HE'S TRANSCENDED THE SPORT TO THE DEGREE HE THINKS HE HAS:

There's no denying Mayweather's name recognition has skyrocketed in the past year, due in the main to his appearances in the two HBO *24/7* documentaries and also to his stint on the reality show *Dancing With The Stars*, which typically draws 20 million viewers a week. The De La Hoya fight was the richest in history and the Hatton fight pulled big numbers as well. He's considerably wealthier and more famous than he was when he famously spurned HBO's "slave wages" years ago, and he is one of the only fighters, along with De La Hoya, who can claim to have "beaten" Bob Arum. (To his credit, Mayweather has never crowed publicly about this, and if he has, he didn't express his delight as colorfully as did De La Hoya some years ago during one of his periodic feuds with Uncle Bob.) You know a fighter has made it when he can dump a promoter as big as Arum and come out better for it. He's been on *The Tonight Show With Jay Leno*, which is a gig not a lot of fighters get, and made the cover of *ESPN The Magazine*. Heady stuff.

It is open to debate, however, how much of Mayweather's recent drawing power is due to *his* drawing power, and how much is due to the power of his dance partner. The De La Hoya fight was viewed primarily and accurately as the featuring the world's best fighter against its most popular one. Mayweather's popularity wasn't really a factor. And we all know who the crowd favorite was in the Hatton fight. You could have fit all of the Mayweather fans in the MGM Grand's men's room. It was Hatton and his British fans, who made the fight a huge event.

How can we tell if Mayweather is the star he thinks he is? See how he draws not against Cotto, who enjoys his own huge following, but against Williams or Margarito or Cintron. Those are each interesting fights. They're not blockbusters, but they're not mismatches. Could they do 300,000 pay-per-view buys? Manny Pacquiao can do that against his shadow. Can Mayweather sell himself in a fight where he does not cast himself as the villain, or as the evil and polar opposite of his opponent? We don't know. We'd like to find out. ■

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Chip . . . Gerry Cooney (l) chips onto 18th green while Sir Henry Cooper (r) is enroute to next tee.

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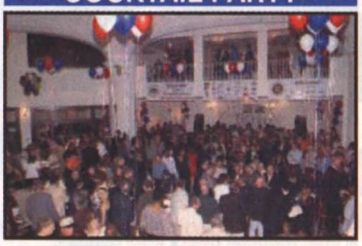
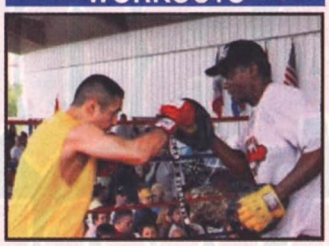


Stars . . . Boxers and fans enjoy VIP cocktail party reception.

MUSEUM

Ricardo Lopez points to his championship trunks.

WORKOUTS



Oscar Diaz works the bag mitts with Tommy Brooks during public workout.

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Minter, Stracey, and Buchanan provide stories.

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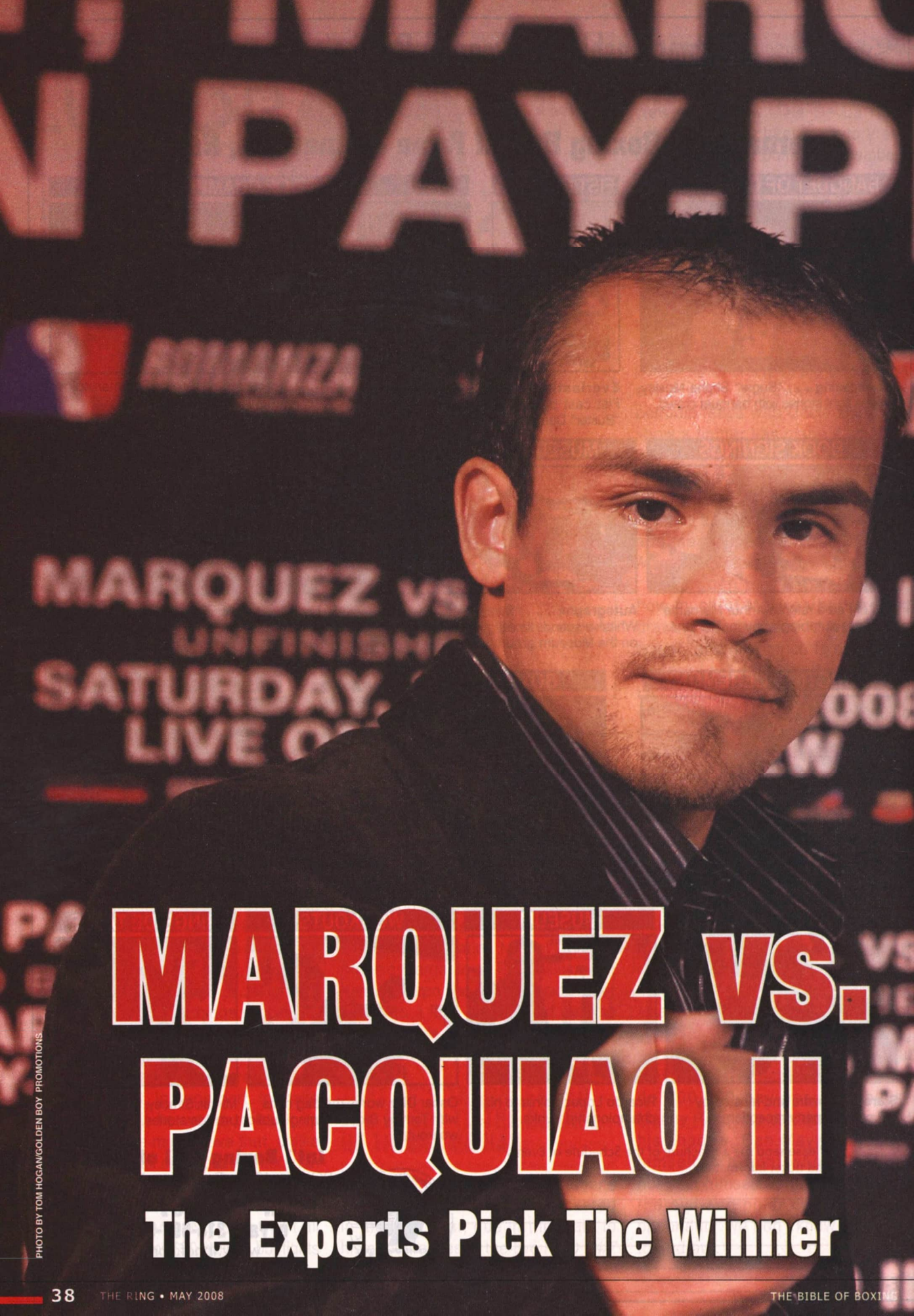


MARQUEZ vs. PACQUIAO II

The Experts Pick The Winner

PHOTO BY TOM HOGAN/GOLDEN BOY PROMOTIONS

Compiled by Joe Santoliquito

We all like definitive endings in sports, especially boxing. Draws can be particularly confounding, prompting plenty of dispute and speculation. Such was the case when then-featherweight champion Manny Pacquiao and Juan Manuel Marquez battled to a scintillating 12-round draw on May 8, 2004.

Although fans were eager for a quick rematch, it didn't happen. Now, fours years after their first encounter, Pacquiao, 45-3-2 (35), and Marquez, 48-3-1 (35), will finally renew hostilities, March 15, at the Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas. The vacant RING junior lightweight world championship will be on the line, as Pacquiao is the number-one contender and Marquez is number two. The bout will be televised by HBO Pay-Per-View.

In their first fight, "Pac-Man" dropped Marquez three times in the opening round with searing lefts to the head, but he couldn't keep the Mexican down. When Marquez shook off the cobwebs and found his legs, he began tactically breaking down Pacquiao like none of Pac-Man's previous opponents ever have.

Pacquiao was tagged often and rocked on several occasions by Marquez' savvy counterpunches, but fought back desperately to stay in the fight through the latter portion of the bout. After the final bell, the blood-splattered

fighters walked around the ring arm-in-arm, as the crowd stood and cheered.

Everybody agreed it had been a great fight, but none of the three judges agreed on the verdict. John Stewart had it 115-110 for Pacquiao, Guy Jutras scored it 115-110 for Marquez, and Burt Clements had it even at 113-113.

Both are now fighting four pounds heavier and continue to be successful. Pacquiao has gone 7-1 (5) since they last fought, while Marquez has gone 6-1 (2).

THE RING polled 20 experts from Latin America, North America, and the Philippines for their opinions and predictions as to what they think will happen when Pac-Man meets Marquez in their long-awaited rematch. Here is what they had to say:

Joe Tessitore *(ESPN2's* Friday Night Fights *blow-by-blow broadcaster)*: "I've always felt that Marquez has the worst style for Manny. When Manny is at his best, he beats Marquez. When Manny is not focused, it could be a tough night for him. I do think Manny will be focused for this, so I'll go with Manny by decision. We could see the same fireworks we saw the first time, but 90 percent of the first fight was Marquez counterpunching. Pacquiao will fight smarter and more controlled in the rematch."

Robert Garcia *(trainer)*: "I've known Manny personally, and my younger brother, Miguel, used to spar with him. Knowing him, the only one who might be able to beat Manny is Marquez. Manny is very strong and very quick, and he goes into the ring knowing he can beat anyone. I lean on Marquez winning a close decision, based on the first fight. He won more rounds in the first fight, after being dropped three times. He still came back, which tells me coming out fresh, he'll be even better this time."

Daniel Herbert *(British* Boxing News *editor):* "I don't think the jump from 126 to 130 pounds will make a significant difference. With his muscled physique, Manny will be glad for the extra pounds, but, then, so will Juan Manuel, who, at 34, is old for a 'little man.' It will be a rerun of their first battle, but this time I go for the blazing speed and terrific power of Pacquiao to edge him home on points against the well-schooled boxing of Marquez."

Ronnie Nathanielsz *(*Manila Standard *boxing writer)*: "The biggest concern among boxing people in the Philippines about Manny Pacquiao has always been his freewheeling lifestyle laced with wine, women, and big bucks thrown away at the cockpits or on some occasions in the casino. To be fair to him, much of it is hearsay, and in the Philippines, when the story moves from one mouth to another, the amounts grow bigger and the tales taller. This time around, Pacquiao kept his word to celebrated trainer Freddie Roach that he would be at the Wild Card Gym two months before the fight and flew in to Los Angeles on January 15. That's why I see a focused and well-trained Pacquiao with his superior speed, quick movement, and awesome punching power winning by a stoppage within eight rounds."

Bernard Osuna *(color commentator for Telefutura):* "Even though we've waited four years for this to happen, both guys are still near their primes, and near the top of their capabilities. This will be the continuation of a great battle. I see Marquez overcoming the mistakes he made the first time around and I see him outclassing a much-improved Manny Pacquiao. This fight will be more evenly matched, but in the end, I see Juan Manuel being able to outsmart and outbox Manny."

Steve Farhood *(*ShoBox *commentator):* "I thought Marquez deserved the decision the first time they fought. I'm starting to see a slight deceleration in Pacquiao. Marquez proved that he's still at or near his best in the Marco Antonio Barrera fight. Marquez' counterpunching style will work in his favor in winning a decision."

Ted Lerner *(THE RING's Philippines correspondent):* "These two guys are made for each other. Marquez will try to dish out more of that boxing clinic he gave Pacquiao after Manny's first-round rampage in their first fight. Pacquiao will be getting about two months of solid training in with Freddie Roach, and everyone knows what that means: Pac-Man's going to come in like a hungry lion. I see Marquez executing his plan well early, but, lured by the sheer noise and hype of the event, eventually taking Pacquiao's bait and getting sucked into a war. Manny, in the best shape of his life, happily obliges him: Pacquiao by kayo in the 11th in an all-time classic and leading Fight of the Year candidate."

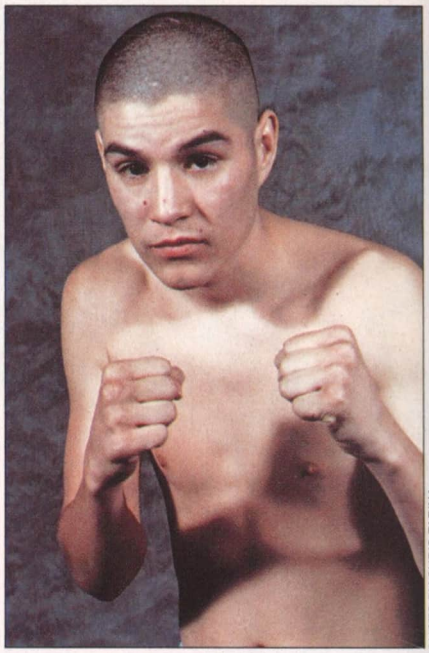


PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA

Featherweight contender Steven Luevano, who trained with Marquez, said the Mexican warrior was on the verge of quitting during the first fight, after getting knocked down three times in the opening round, but his deep pride wouldn't let him.

Dan Rafael *(ESPN.com boxing writer):* "It's a close fight either way, but I lean toward Pacquiao. I think he's better than he was the first time they fought. He uses both hands more, incorporating his right hand under Freddie Roach. He has a little better idea how to box and use strategy. I think Marquez is still terrific, though he's lost a tiny little bit. He's 34 and he's still outstanding, but you just get the feeling that at some point, he's been in too many tough fights and that it will catch up to him."

Carlos Caban *(ESPNdeportes.com senior director)*: "Anytime there's a matchup between fighters of this caliber–and weight class—there's bound to be fireworks. I would figure that Marquez would be wary of trading punches with Pacquiao from the opening bell, which is what landed him on the canvas three times and broke his nose in that infamous first

round of their controversial draw in 2004. This time around, it's going to be a hard-fought bout, with Marquez counterpunching and wearing down Pacquiao's ferocious attack—basically following the script of Marquez' remarkable comeback in the first fight. Marquez, the gutsiest fighter I've ever seen, will win by decision."

Keith Idec *(West Paterson, New Jersey* Herald News *boxing writer):* "I think it's a case where Pacquiao has more left than Marquez does at this stage of their careers. I see Pacquiao being too strong late in a very competitive fight. Eventually, Pacquiao will wear down Marquez, get to him, and stop him."

Darius Ortiz *(ESPN.com boxing editor):* "Manny Pacquiao's two-fisted attack is enough to give any fighter a tough night. I just wonder if he still has the hunger and intensity to tear into opponents like he once did. In his fights with Erik Morales, Pacquiao forced the issue with volleys of quick, explosive punches. But Pacquaio looked like a completely different fighter in his last fight against Marco Antonio Barrera. Gone were the fusillade of punches; instead he chose to wade in and load up on his shots. Marquez brings to the table a style that he's shown can be effective against the voracious Filipino. Marquez' quick counters, solid balance, and smooth mobility won't allow Pacquiao to dash in behind his punches without getting punished. Marquez should be able to pick up from where he left off and box his way to a comfortable victory."

Marc Abrams *(15rounds.com managing editor):* "I like Pacquiao. He's learned to settle down a little and box more. Marquez has been more fan-friendly in his last few fights, becoming more of a warrior. But Pacquiao seems to be really focused this time. There's no chaos around this training camp, and I think Pacquiao wins a close, but unanimous decision."

Edgar Gonzalez *(Fightnews.com correspondent):* "It's been nearly four years after their first fight ended in a disputed 12-round draw. Since then, Juan Manuel Marquez has been hungry for another piece of Manny Pacquiao. Pacquiao has not been focusing on boxing like he should be. I personally think he is a bit overrated and his superstar image has got to him. Pacquiao has fought many great champions, but at the later stages of their careers. Juan Manuel Marquez will win a 12-round decision, if he is able to control the wildcat in the ring with his pinpoint accuracy and his hammering power."

Bernard Fernandez *(*Philadelphia Daily News *boxing writer):* "Pacquiao brings me back to a time when I remember seeing a young Roberto Duran. Pacquiao is not only good, but also entertaining. I see Pacquiao winning a decision, and people will come away feeling they saw something special."

Keiran Mulvaney *(Rueters boxing writer):* "Manny has rounded out his skills and improved overall since the last time they fought. I don't think Marquez can outbox Pacquiao for nine or 10 rounds like he did the first time they met. But I don't see Manny dropping Marquez three times either. Pacquiao by decision."

Steven Luevano *(featherweight contender):* "Marquez will win a decision because I'm pretty sure he will never forget getting knocked down by Pacquiao the first time. Marquez felt embarrassed. I trained with him and he said to me that he thought about giving up, but his pride wouldn't let him. Pacquiao is an endurance fighter who keeps coming. Marquez will counterpunch again because that's the only way to catch Pacquiao, getting him on his way in."

Wally Matthews *(*Newsday *boxing writer):* "It's going to be another great fight. Pacquiao is a proven winner, and I'm going to assume that the Pac-Man we saw four years ago is the same fighter, or close to the same fighter, that he is today. He hurt Marquez badly the first time they met, so I'd have to believe he is capable of doing the same things this time too, until proven otherwise. I don't think either guy can stop the other, so I like Pacquiao by decision."

Bert Sugar *(boxing historian):* "I'm a Marquez fan. I think he's excellent, but he can be hit. I see the rematch between these two as another great fight, like the first one. Since they met, Pacquiao has certainly found a second hand under the great work Freddie Roach has done with him. But I think Marquez can outbox Pacquiao. Remember, he came off the floor three times in the first round to get a draw. I like Marquez by decision."

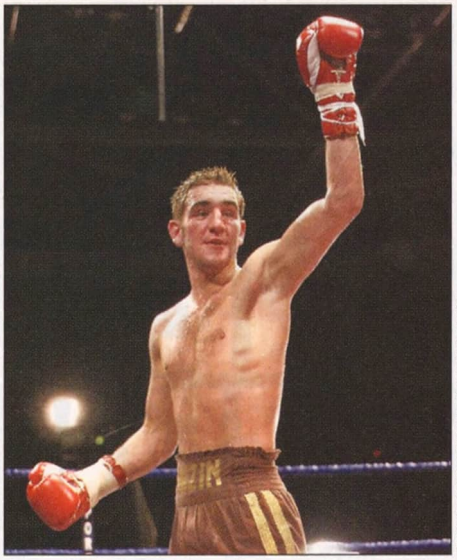


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

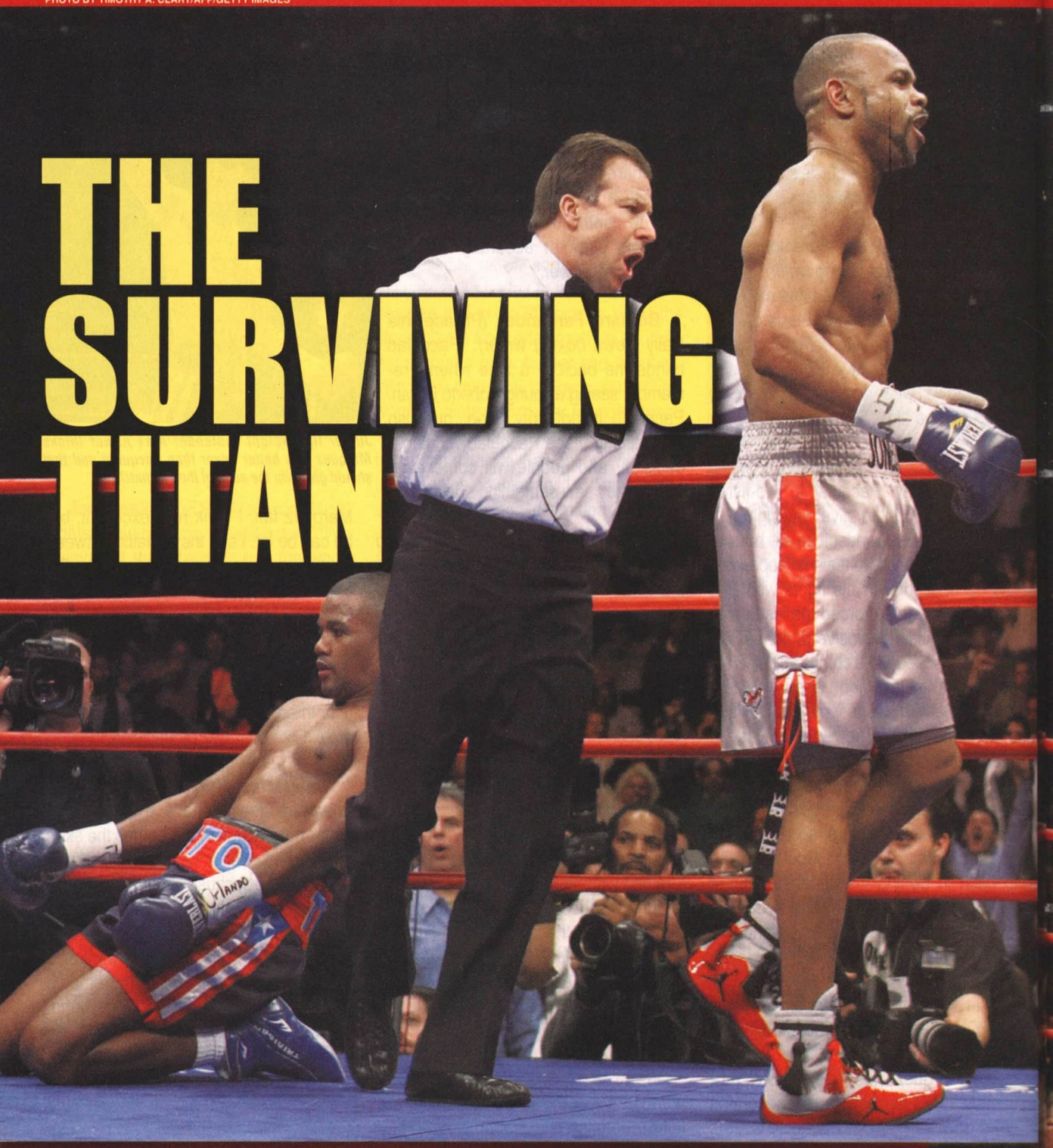
Junior lightweight contender Alex Arthur thinks Marquez is a better boxer than Pacquiao and that should give him the edge in their rematch.

Chris Mannix *(SI.com boxing writer):* "Marquez doesn't have the power to knock out Pacquiao, but he has the skills to beat him over a 12-round distance. I like Marquez because I think he's hungry for this rematch. I got a chance to talk to him and I know he regrets getting caught in the first round of their first fight. I also know he regrets not taking the rematch sooner, before he lost to Chris John. Marquez has what he wants now."

Alex Arthur *(junior lightweight contender):* "This fight will be an absolute cracker. I think Marquez will win because he is a far better boxer than Pacquiao. In the first fight, if Pacquiao hadn't knocked Marquez down, Marquez would have won easily. Marquez is easily the best fighter in the division, and rightly so, because he beat the man who beat the man. I just think Marquez is brilliant and I would love to fight him at some point."

The Final Tally: Pacquiao 10, Marquez 10. ■

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



THE SURVIVING TITAN

Jones Gets By Trinidad, But Is He Merely Fooling Himself?

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

By Don Stradley

In his recent biography of Col. Buffalo Bill Cody, Larry McMurtry suggests the secret to Cody's success was that he simply looked better on horseback than any man ever born.

To some degree, a similar statement could be made about Roy Jones. When he is so inclined, he looks better in a boxing ring than any boxer ever born. That could be why the press has always been on his side, even when the fans weren't. On January 19, as he squared off against Felix Trinidad at Madison Square Garden, you could squint your eyes and almost imagine that it was vintage Roy. All you had to do was forget that he was beating up a 35-year-old ex-welterweight who only fights every few years. Cody, too, relied on his admirers to forgive him his silver hair. A willing suspension of disbelief is always helpful, whether we're watching Wild West heroes or aging prizefighters.

The MSG bout, billed by Don King for HBO Pay-Per-View as "Bring On The Titans," proved to be a tough sell. Jones was never

Jones floored Trinidad twice, once in the seventh round (opposite page) and again in the 10th (above), en route to a 12-round unanimous decision at Madison Square Garden. The high-profile victory gave the 39-year-old Jones' sagging career a significant boost.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Promoter Don King worked hard to sell a battle of over-the-hill stars to the public and the press, and while the card does not appear to have been a financial blockbuster, the so-called "Battle Of The Titans" turned out to be fairly entertaining fight nonetheless.

a big attraction in New York, and was less so now. Trinidad has always been a huge attraction in a city heavily populated with Puerto Ricans, but King had gone to the well with him too many times. The Garden, which overvalued the fight and actually paid King an $8.5-million fee to stage the event, set out to recoup its investment by initially charging a surreal $15,000 for ringside seats (later reduced to a still-ridiculous $5,000). It didn't help matters that local coverage of the fight was knocked off the sports pages in favor of the New York Giants' rise to the Super Bowl.

Having already fleeced the Garden for the site fee, King chugged along, hopeful of gaining further revenue from PPV sales.

On fight day the show seemed stuck in quicksand. Jones' trainer, Alton Merkerson, was pounding on the big brown door that serves as the Garden's employee/media entrance, as half a dozen pugs and their handlers milled about, braced against the January cold.

"Why are they making the fighters wait out here?" Merkerson said. Jones was not there yet. His image was flashing on a large screen above Penn Station. It was the younger Jones, the one who ended Montell Griffin with one clean shot. Merkerson snapped open his mobile phone and started poking numbers. "Somebody call Don at the office," Merkerson fumed. A wiry youth with braided hair and gold teeth said, "I just came from the office and they aren't doing anything." Perhaps King and company felt they'd already done enough by bringing Trinidad and Jones together.

"You can't tell the boxers to show up for a 4:30 call and then make them wait outside in the cold," said Merkerson. The big screen above was onto a new image. It was the gang from Sesame Street, scheduled to appear at the Garden in a few weeks. The Cookie Monster danced with a giant cookie, and then the screen went back to Bring on the Titans. A 20-foot image of Jones' face was overlooking Times Square, scowling at the pedestrians on Eighth Avenue.

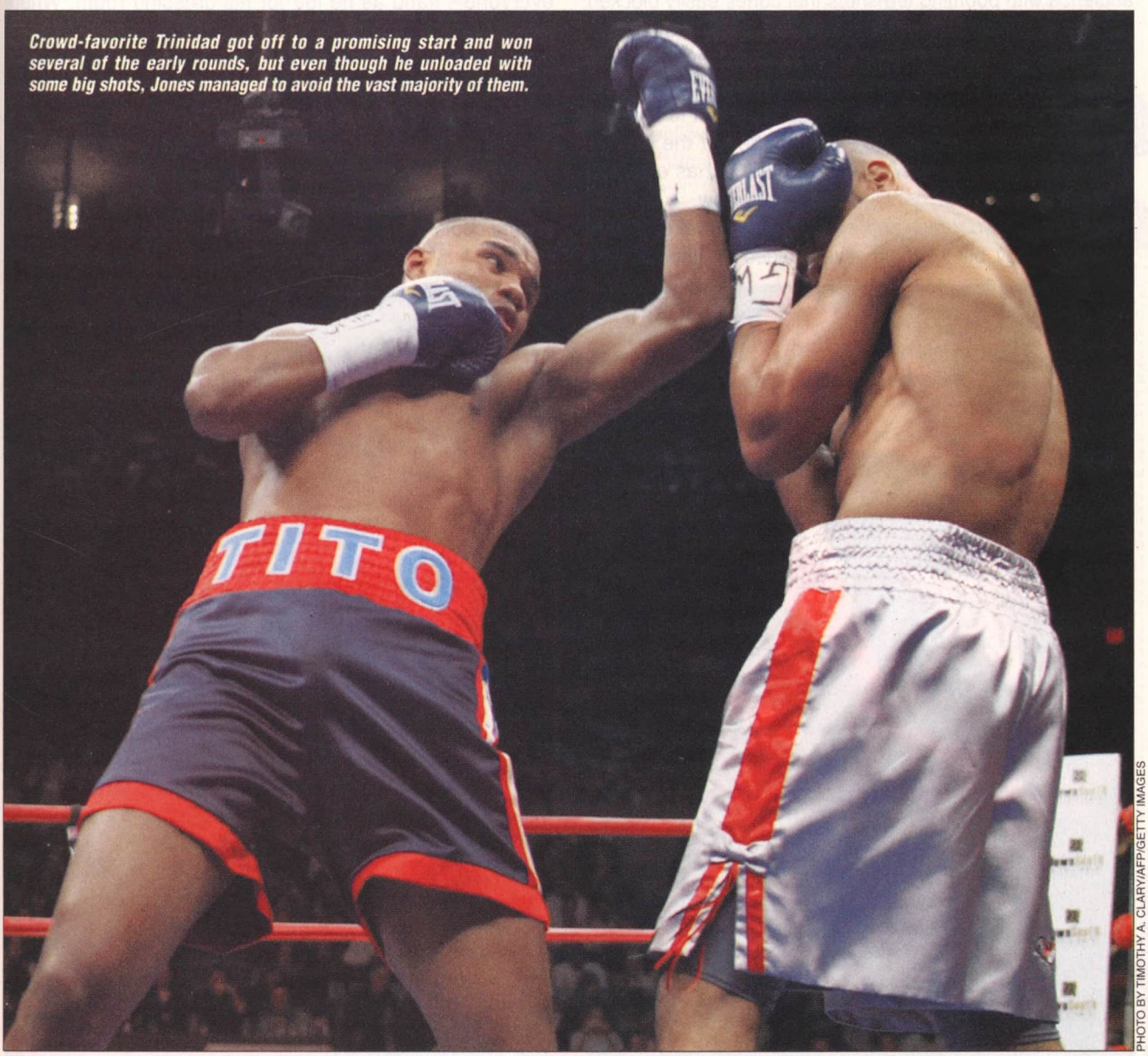
Jones' last New York bout was a 12-round snoozer against David Telesco at Radio City Music Hall in 2000, when

Jones appeared with the Rockettes and rapped his own entry music. Back then, Jones was still revered by the press, but he was becoming a bloated bore. When he suffered a pair of knockout losses in 2004, and then took a long-distance beating in his rubber match with Antonio Tarver, the media was ready to chip in and buy a nice marble grave marker, chiseled with the words "Here Lies Mister Unstoppable." But Jones has evolved since then. Gone are the attempts to be the Michael Jordan of boxing, the crossover star. There are no more funny commercials on ESPN, and he no longer appears alongside the HBO broadcasting team in a tuxedo. He always looked a tad uncomfortable in those roles, anyway.

Nowadays he's often seen in the company of his four sons, who are all glad to see their daddy in the ring again. He also seems less interested in crossover appeal than he is in the Lord. Of all the religious men who have stepped into a ring, Jones is the most convincing Bible thumper. It's not hard to imagine him operating his own little church someday in the woods of Pensacola.

Still, it was a cranky bunch that filed into the pressroom before the bout. One writer chuffed that after a stellar 2007, this was a dull way to begin 2008. The only excitement came when Iran Barkley and Emile Griffith nearly trampled us on their way to the buffet table. Watching a ballsy fighter like Barkley and a legitimately great champion like Griffith hanging out for free eats was an odd note to begin the evening.

Actually, the whole show felt as if the Over The Hill Gang had descended upon the Big Apple. Along with the aging main-eventers, the undercard featured DeMarcus Corley, 33, Ezra Sellers, 39, Emmanuel Nwodo, 33, Roman Karmazin, 35, Alex Bunema, 32, and Andrew Golota, 40. King, too, seemed moth-eaten. He needed help climbing the ring steps, and looked like an aged carnival impresario who had brought a team of decrepit acrobats to New York, a city that craves younger, faster entertainment. Indeed, King's boxing show felt like an anachronism.



Crowd-favorite Trinidad got off to a promising start and won several of the early rounds, but even though he unloaded with some big shots, Jones managed to avoid the vast majority of them.

PHOTO BY TIMOTHY A. CLARY/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

The halls of the Garden were decorated with enormous posters of Brock Lesnar, the ex-wrestler has moved into mixed martial arts; down the street was a billboard that seemed a half-acre wide advertising an upcoming WWE event. But even Buffalo Bill Cody had to eventually compete with motion pictures and automobiles, and he always managed to entertain. In the tradition of Cody's old crew, the codgers assembled by King rose to the occasion. There were

Have We Seen The Last Of Tito?

As Felix Trinidad strolled casually to the ring, he didn't look like he was coming to a fight. The satisfied look on his face, the gracious nods of his head, and the melancholy music that accompanied his ring walk made him look like he'd come to accept a Lifetime Achievement award. If he knew the Puerto Rican audience wasn't there in their usual numbers, he didn't show it.

Although outgunned by a faster and stronger fighter, Trinidad, 42-3 (35), never gave up, occasionally thrilling his audience with booming tee-shots that Jones easily blocked. Trinidad had some good rounds, namely the first three, and then the 10th, which saw him dominate the action before Jones knocked him down a second time. Trinidad did very little during the 11th and 12th, perhaps content to finish on his feet. The loss didn't leave him shattered, the way his losses to Hopkins and Winky Wright did, but as one wise wag put it, he may be getting used to it by now.

"I took off two years and eight months. I take nothing away from Roy, but if I could have avoided the knockdowns, I think I could have won the fight," Trinidad said. "Roy was very fast and strong. He threw great punches. I have no excuses. He demonstrated speed and took my bodypunches." When asked about his future, Trinidad added, "I'm going to talk to my father, but I'll make the decision if I will retire."

When the bout was over, Trinidad remained in the ring with a Puerto Rican flag draped around his shoulders. A hundred or so Trinidad supporters lingered at ringside, taking his picture and hugging him. He made a point of touching everyone's hand as he left for his dressing room. Where Jones and Trinidad were found in the immediate aftermath of the bout was appropriate: Jones was with the media, while Tito was with the people

Miguel Cotto may be the current hot Puerto Rican star in New York, but Trinidad will always be an icon. He has been finished as a fighter for a while, but he has never figured out how to say goodbye to his fans. A gallant loss to another legend could be the best way.

—D.S.

"Tito" still a fan favorite

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

some knockouts, displays of toughness, and old Golota beat Mike Mollo in a heavyweight slugfest that left the crowd breathless. By the time Jones made his entrance, sans the Rockettes, the Garden was psyched.

Jones, whose image was angrily booed for most of the night, was met with neither a cheer nor a jeer. It was more of a low howl that swirled around the Garden like a wind, hovering at ground level but never quite reaching the upper decks. The mob was a mixture of loyal Puerto Ricans who had arrived to support Trinidad, a smattering of hip-hoppers complete with shaved domes and the current New York gear (knee length black leather coats decorated with glitter, featuring slogans like "Death Before Dishonor"), and a large number of white males, the ones who remembered Roy and "Tito" from their 1990s heyday. There was also a Polish crowd on hand for Golota. But the diverse crowd still numbered a disappointing 12,168, many of whom were comped. Still, a heavily papered house can make noise, and Trinidad's entrance was hailed with a throaty roar that filled the arena.

The fight was better than we thought it would be. Trinidad, 170, started out well, pushing Jones back with a stiff jab. After six rounds THE RING and two official judges had things even. But in the seventh Jones, 169, dropped Trinidad with a right to the temple that bent Trinidad's neck and sent him to his knees. Jones, who complained of a jammed knuckle, thought he was close to stopping Trinidad: "He was slipping some real good punches, and I was missing knocking him out by about an inch on some of those shots."

Jones fought a methodical fight, keeping his guard high and tight, occasionally wiggling his hips or attempting an ugly Ali-shuffle. Jones can no longer breeze by on his improvisational genius; he has to win rounds with a concentrated effort. Still, no matter how old Jones gets, he'll never be a *bad* fighter. He's no longer great, but he's good. He dropped Trinidad again in the 10th, and by the time the scorecards were tallied, he had nothing to worry about. Judges Nelson Vasquez and Tom Kaczmarek scored 116-110, while Julie Lederman scored 117-109, all for Jones. THE RING saw Jones as the winner, 117-111.

"A lot of people thought I was done, but I'm still capable of doing a lot of things," said Jones, 52-4 (38). "I'm capable of beating anyone I get my mind right for. We had a beautiful training camp. I actually enjoyed training. I had beautiful sparring partners."

Jones wasn't bothered that the Garden emptied out long before the decision was announced. Not many wanted to hang around for a postfight celebration. After all, they were mostly Trinidad fans and curiosity-seekers. But the press was paying attention to him again, and that lifted Jones to a great degree. Jones was especially proud of being a former heavyweight titlist who now fought at 169.

"Show me another fighter who can do that," he said. Then he bellowed to the rapidly emptying arena, "What else can it be but the power of God?"

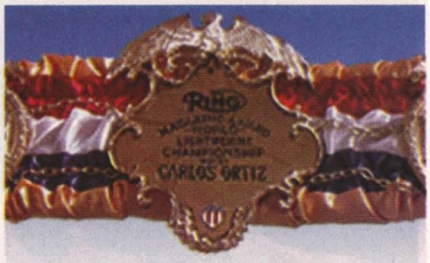
It's hard to say where Jones goes next. The winner between Bernard Hopkins and Joe Calzaghe would be an intriguing opponent for Jones, as would the winner of the bout between Chad Dawson and Glen Johnson. The winner of Jermain Taylor-Kelly Pavlik might be willing too. But it would be hard to pick Jones over anyone but a faded Trinidad.

"I'll fight anyone, anywhere, anytime," Jones said. "If Calzaghe and Hopkins can't get it done, I'll go to Wales."

Predictably, and justifiably, Jones was brimming. "It was a great night, and we put on a great fight. Everybody thought we were old."

We still do, Roy. We're just not ready to bury you yet.

When Ray Leonard was trying to keep his career going in the late-1980s, he brought back a pair of old rivals, Tommy Hearns and Roberto Duran. The bouts were reasonably good draws at the box office, and the Hearns bout, at least, was memorable. Jones could conceivably do the same thing and fight Tarver again, or Johnson. And don't discount something



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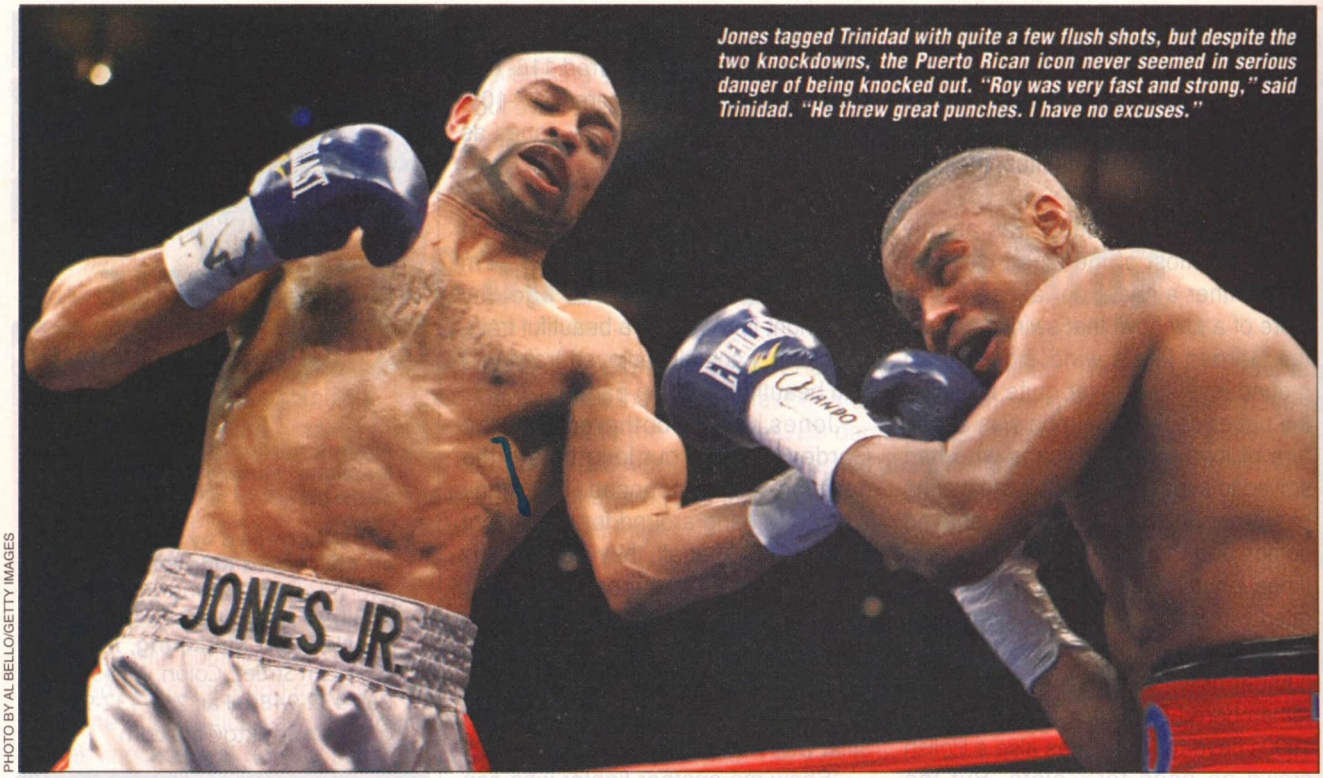


Jones tagged Trinidad with quite a few flush shots, but despite the two knockdowns, the Puerto Rican icon never seemed in serious danger of being knocked out. "Roy was very fast and strong," said Trinidad. "He threw great punches. I have no excuses."

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

truly off the wall, like Jones vs. James Toney. But Hopkins and/or Calzaghe seem the most logical opponents, the ones who could help Roy sell tickets, something he's never been able to do in large numbers.

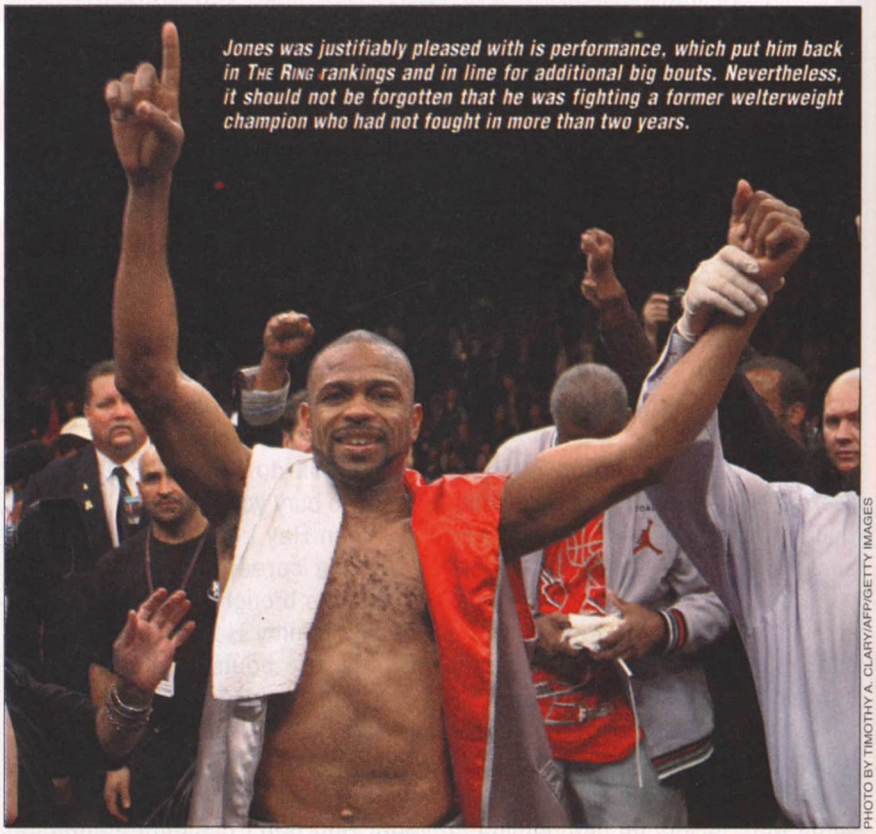
"I don't know when I'm going to leave," Jones said when asked about his future. "I don't know when exactly is my time ... When they say it's my time, it's my time." He continued, "I just want to thank you all for coming out and supporting us and this wonderful card. I hope y'all got your money's worth, and I hope I entertained you."

For some of us, Jones was more entertaining against Trinidad than he was the last time he was in New York. As for getting our money's worth, that depends on whether you bought the PPV for 50 bucks, or shelled out a few thousand for ringside seats. It also depends on how much you liked Jones to begin with. As for turning back the clock, he didn't turn it back too far. But, at 39, fighting like you did at 37 is a boon.

One hundred years before Jones fought Trinidad, Buffalo Bill Cody came to Madison Square Garden with a new show. He'd added a gimmick—football on horseback—and the customers were thrilled. "Buffalo Bill is growing young again," wrote *The New York Times*. "If this is not literally true, at least, he does not appear to be getting any older." That same month, Cody went into a Chicago hospital suffering from a nervous breakdown.

Stardom is difficult when you're past your prime. Jones succeeded against Trinidad. It will be harder next time. ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING



Jones was justifiably pleased with is performance, which put him back in THE RING rankings and in line for additional big bouts. Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that he was fighting a former welterweight champion who had not fought in more than two years.

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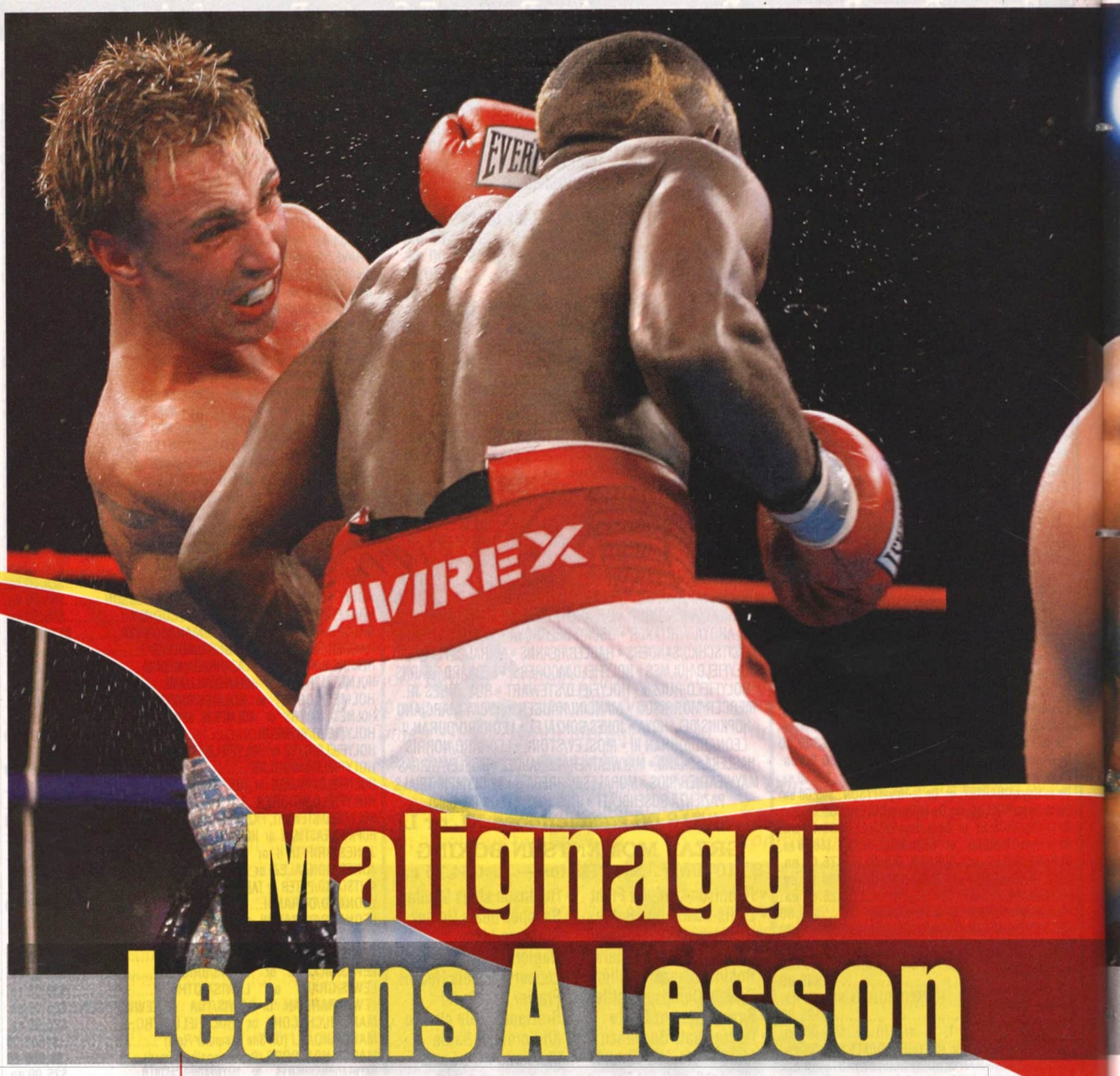

Malignaggi Learns A Lesson

The Magic Man Should Have No Illusions About His Power

PHOTOS BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Give and take: In an effort to please fans, Malignaggi partially abandoned his slick boxing style against Ngoudjo (opposite page). But gunning for a knockout left him vulnerable to Ngoudjo's counters (above) and resulted in a much closer fight than originally anticipated.

By Don Stewart

At the start of its January 5 show, *Showtime Championship Boxing* ran a short intro clip about Paulie Malignaggi. It was basically 90 seconds of "The Magic Man" talking about himself, which is what he does best, aside from throwing punches. The intro included a quote that proved almost as eerily prophetic as the film *Wag The Dog*.

"A fighter's main goal is to win fights, but for Paulie Malignaggi, it's a little more than that ... I want people to know that they watched Paulie Malignaggi, I want them to go to work Monday morning and say, 'Man, did you see that crazy kid fighting on Saturday night? Man that kid's tough. Man, can he fight.'"

Minutes later, the brash Brooklyn junior welterweight would spend most of the 12-rounder in Atlantic City against 6-to-1 underdog Herman Ngoudjo trying too hard to leave an impression. The

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

When he moved laterally and utilized his left jab in the early rounds, Malignaggi was effective. But note that Malignaggi is not making a proper fist, which could be one of the reasons his punches have only accounted for a mere five knockouts in 25 pro bouts.

boxer tried to play slugger, and it nearly cost him his belt, along with a possible big-money match with world junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton later this year.

Malignaggi, 24-1 (5), got the unanimous decision in a fight that was closer than the judges scored it, but it looked like a step back from his June 2007 shutout of Lovemore Ndou.

"I think he was under a lot of pressure, being in his first title defense and with Ricky Hatton calling him out," trainer Buddy McGirt said. "He's got a lot on his mind, trying to please the fans. It was a learning experience for him."

Having a measure of success turning brawler Arturo Gatti into a boxer late in Gatti's career, McGirt knows a thing for two about switching styles. Boxing might be the only sport where its athletes morph stylistically in an effort to thrill fans and impress network suits. It can be a risky gamble either way.

Continue piling up decision victories in one-sided fights that might turn off fans, or try to be more popular by taking chances and going for knockouts? The first option is more likely to make you a Hall of Famer, but the second is more likely to make you rich. Typically, though, boxers have struggled when they've failed to be true to their styles.

Tired of being written off as boring, Chris Byrd began abandoning his defensive artistry after winning a heavyweight belt in 2002. He wound up struggling against guys he should have boxed circles around, such as Andrew Golota, before getting bulldozed by Wladimir Klitschko in 2006 and stopped by Alexander Povetkin last October.

Whether due to age or his lack of marketability, Winky Wright began opening up more and moving less after dominating Felix Trinidad in 2005. The result has been less-than-sterling wins against Sam Soliman and Ike Quartey, a controversial draw with Jermain Taylor, and a points loss to Bernard Hopkins.

We've also seen a more aggressive style from slick counterpunching junior lightweight Juan Manuel Marquez of late. So far so good, but his March 15 showdown with Manny Pacquiao should be a more telling test for Marquez' altered approach. The jury also remains out on light-punching lightweight Zahir Raheem, who scored a one-round, one-punch knockout of Ricardo Dominguez the day before Malignaggi-Ngoudjo in the hope of reviving his dormant career.

As for Malignaggi, who hasn't stopped anyone since 2003, any change could be temporary. "When he's boxing and moving, he can still please the crowd,"

Ngoudjo Deserves A Break

Though he disagreed with the decision, Herman Ngoudjo was calm and classy after his controversial, 12-round loss to Paulie Malignaggi for the IBF junior welterweight belt. Maybe it's because the muscular 28-year-old is used to things not going his way in this sport..

A native of Cameroon who used to run marathons, Ngoudjo reached the 2000 Sydney Olympics despite a lack of experienced trainers in his country and little help from his government. After losing in the first round of the Games, he decided to go elsewhere for proper instruction, but the government managed to block him from leaving.

Ngoudjo finally escaped to Canada, which gave him protection as a refugee. He hooked up with trainer Howard Grant in Montreal, turned pro in 2003, and cruised through his first 15 fights before meeting former lightweight champ Jose Luis Castillo last January. In a fight many thought Ngoudjo won, Castillo was awarded a split decision.

He didn't get any favors in Atlantic City against the heavily favored Malignaggi, either. Malignaggi frequently held and nailed Ngoudjo in the back of the head, but referee Allan Huggins never seemed to notice. In fact, in the seventh round he gave Ngoudjo a warning for hitting behind the head. Huggins, working his first major title fight, also gave Malignaggi two breaks to tie his shoelace, and he might have missed a fourth-round knockdown.

Still, "The Black Panther" used his longer reach and fast hands to score well from the outside and often force Malignaggi to retreat. While Malignaggi was looking for the big punch all night, it was Ngoudjo who landed the harder stuff. "I was never hurt," he said, "but I know I hurt him many times." Ngoudjo's biggest downfall, besides taking the fight in Malignaggi's backyard, was that he should have been more aggressive in certain rounds.

With Malignaggi and promoter Lou DiBella talking about a rematch with Lovemore Ndou and an eventual Ricky Hatton fight, an Ngoudjo rematch doesn't seem too high on the agenda. He deserves one, or at least a shot at one of the other beltholders.

"Because I was in his place, for me to beat him, I would have had to knock him out," Ngoudjo said. "He was holding me every time. I don't know what happened with the judges. That's okay. I'll be back."

—D.S.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Ngoudjo catches Malignaggi with his hands down

said Malignaggi's promoter, Lou DiBella. "I think when he tries to be more crowd-pleasing, he puts himself in unnecessary danger. And frankly, he doesn't have that kind of punch where he's gonna hurt anybody with a one or a one-two. He needs to put punches together. He's gotta worry not about pleasing, he's gotta worry about winning."

Malignaggi, 27, was smart and slick in the opening two rounds against Ngoudjo, before his lack of patience began to cost him. Jabbing well, Malignaggi kept his longer-armed opponent out of range and tied up when he got too close. He landed a few solid rights and left hooks off the jab, and drove Ngoudjo into the ropes at the end of the first round.

Malignaggi said he brought a puncher's mentality into the fight, which he admits wasn't the right mindset. Really, Malignaggi looking for a knockout is kind of like Steven Seagal looking for an Oscar. He also expected Ngoudjo to be more aggressive, but when the Cameroon-born Canadian opted to fight from the outside, it only exacerbated the situation for Malignaggi.

"Basically, I lost my patience, and it cost me a good performance," Malignaggi said. "I could have done what I did the first two rounds the whole 12 rounds. I wanted to get the stoppage. Me doing that is obviously quite idiotic."

He began jabbing and moving less and getting hit more by Ngoudjo, 16-2 (9), whose other loss was a controversial split decision to Jose Luis Castillo a year before. Malignaggi caught Ngoudjo off-balance with a left hook to the jaw 45 seconds into the third, but the challenger came back with several good right hands.

Early in the fourth, Ngoudjo appeared to score a flash knockdown with a right hand, but referee Allan Huggins ruled it a slip. The African outjabbed Malignaggi from the outside and landed a solid one-two at the bell. Malignaggi went to the corner with a cut over his left eye, the result of a headbutt.

Malignaggi used his jab to have a decent fifth round, after which McGirt could be heard telling him: "You're mak-

ing it harder than it has to be. You're winning, but I need combinations." Malignaggi followed that advice in the sixth, though he still wasn't doing it enough.

In the seventh, Ngoudjo opened with a hard right that sent sweat and water, and maybe some hair gel, flying off Malignaggi's head. Another right hand 45 seconds later had Malignaggi dazed and holding on for the rest of the round. Ngoudjo didn't have enough power to finish the job, but he continued to rattle Malignaggi at close range with right hands throughout the round.

When he went back to the corner, Malignaggi thought back to the first Kelly Pavlik-Jermain Taylor fight, how Pavlik came back and won the third after almost getting stopped in the second. With Ngoudjo possibly taking a round off, an aggressive Malignaggi managed to rally and take the eighth.

Malignaggi began landing counter right uppercuts, and his aggressiveness seemed to give him the edge in the close ninth and 10th rounds. Heading into the 11th, Ngoudjo's corner implored their man to pick up the pace. He responded by backing Malignaggi up for the last two rounds and finally going to the body.

While judges Steve Weisfeld (New Jersey) and Kenny Chevalier (Maryland) had Malignaggi winning by a reasonable 115-113 and 116-113, respectively, Al Bennett (New Jersey) must have been phoning in his scores from Asbury Park. He had it 117-111 for Malignaggi. THE RING scored it 114-114. For all of Malignaggi's strategic flaws, it was still a fun fight between two guys with feather fists.

"What I have to work on is I'm consistently inconsistent," Malignaggi said. "When I'm at my best, you can see what I'm capable of. I don't think it was one of my better performances. I don't think there was a question who won the fight; Paulie Malignaggi definitely won the fight. But it wasn't one of my better performances, I'll put it to you like that."

With his wild hair and cocky persona, the outspoken Malignaggi is a tough guy to be indifferent about; fans either love him or hate him. He's almost an Italian incarnation of Hector Camacho. But beneath the trash talk is an honest, smart fighter who knows he has to get back to basics, no matter how much he wants to thrill the fans.

Malignaggi is contractually obligated to give Ndou a rematch, and DiBella is hoping to make that happen by late-spring or early-summer in Manchester, England, as part of a hype-building doubleheader for a fall showdown with Hatton. DiBella admits he made a mistake by keeping his fighter sidelined for seven months.

Ring rust was only part of the problem against Ngoudjo, though. If he were to approach a fight with Hatton with the same mentality as he did with Ngoudjo,

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Ngoudjo found the range for his right hand in the middle rounds and rocked Malignaggi a few times. Although neither man is a big puncher, they put on a close, entertaining scrap that could have gone either way.

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Malignaggi clips Ngoudjo with a right uppercut, a punch that he put to good use the later rounds. But if he's going to have a chance against world champion Ricky Hatton, Malignaggi will have to revert to his stick-and-move mode.

the champion would go through him like a pint of Guinness. Ndou could be the right guy to get him back on track. The first time they met, Malignaggi was dominant, but not boring, in one of the best performances of his career, next to his gutsy 2006 loss to Miguel Cotto.

"I think in the Ndou fight, I was exciting enough," said Malignaggi, THE RING's Comeback Fighter of the Year. "I just dominated the guy. People don't like to see one-sided fights, but the way I fought the Ndou fight, it was a clinical performance, it was my best performance. That's kind of the way I would like to fight every fight."

If he's moving his feet and using his quicker hands, Malignaggi could have a chance against Hatton, who would likely try to pressure him the way Cotto did. It should make for an intriguing fight, especially at Madison Square Garden, where the atmosphere would be sure to make up for any lack of action in the ring.

"I want that fight bad," Malignaggi said. "Listen, after the Ngoudjo fight, people are gonna say, 'Aw, Hatton's gonna walk right through this guy.' But don't be so quick to judge.

"I assure everyone, and I can care less about what everyone is thinking, in 2008 Paulie Malignaggi will beat Ricky Hatton. I've made that promise. I promise you, Paulie Malignaggi will beat Ricky Hatton in 2008."

Remember those words. Maybe they'll also turn out to be prophetic. ■

Don Stewart covers boxing for The Reading (Pennsylvania) Eagle and is a regular contributor to THE RING.

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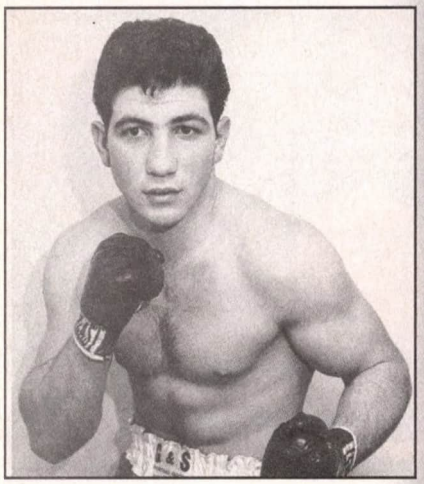
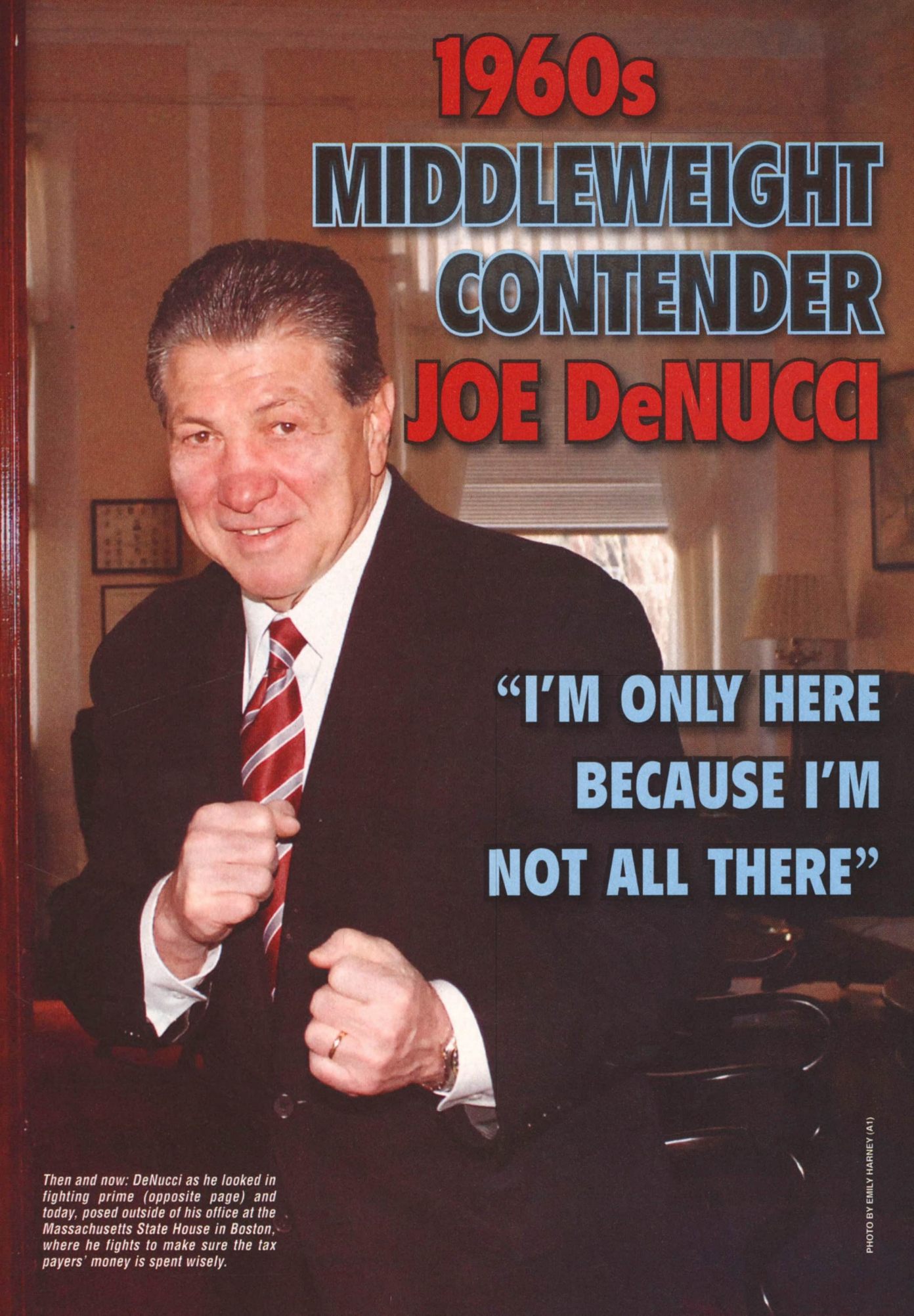


By Don Stradley

Oliver Wendell Holmes once described the Massachusetts State House on Boston's Beacon Hill as "the hub of the solar system." If that's true, then Joe DeNucci could be considered the "hub" of the State House, because he's been working there in one capacity or another since he was a teenager. Yes, it's the same DeNucci who dropped leather on the best middleweights of

1960s MIDDLEWEIGHT CONTENDER JOE DeNUCCI



"I'M ONLY HERE BECAUSE I'M NOT ALL THERE"

Then and now: DeNucci as he looked in fighting prime (opposite page) and today, posed outside of his office at the Massachusetts State House in Boston, where he fights to make sure the tax payers' money is spent wisely.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY (A1)

the 1960s, the one credited with more Boston Garden appearances than any other fighter, the one referred by veterans of the city desk as "Da Nooch."

Currently serving an astonishing sixth term as auditor of the Commonwealth, DeNucci occupies a sprawling second floor office. While imposing statues of New England statesmen are on display throughout the building, DeNucci's quarters are decorated with pictures from his fighting days. One photo is of DeNucci grimacing as he hears the scoring of a 1972 split decision loss to Emile Griffith. DeNucci signed it in black ink: "I was robbed." He's gotten over that one, and he shrugs off most of the other losses too. For that matter, he shrugs off most of the wins. But one scene from the past, not recorded in a record book, still moves him nearly to tears.

It happened after a 1961 Boston Garden bout with Joey Giardello. After the final round, a tired DeNucci returned to his corner and noticed his father, Sandy DeNucci, at ringside. Next to Sandy was Rocky Marciano. DeNucci never forgot the sight of his "two idols" standing together.

"It's my biggest memory from when I was boxing," DeNucci said. "They were both on their feet yelling, 'You won, Joe! You won!'"

The bout was ruled a draw. Giardello went on to win the middleweight championship. As for DeNucci, fate had other things in mind for him.

***

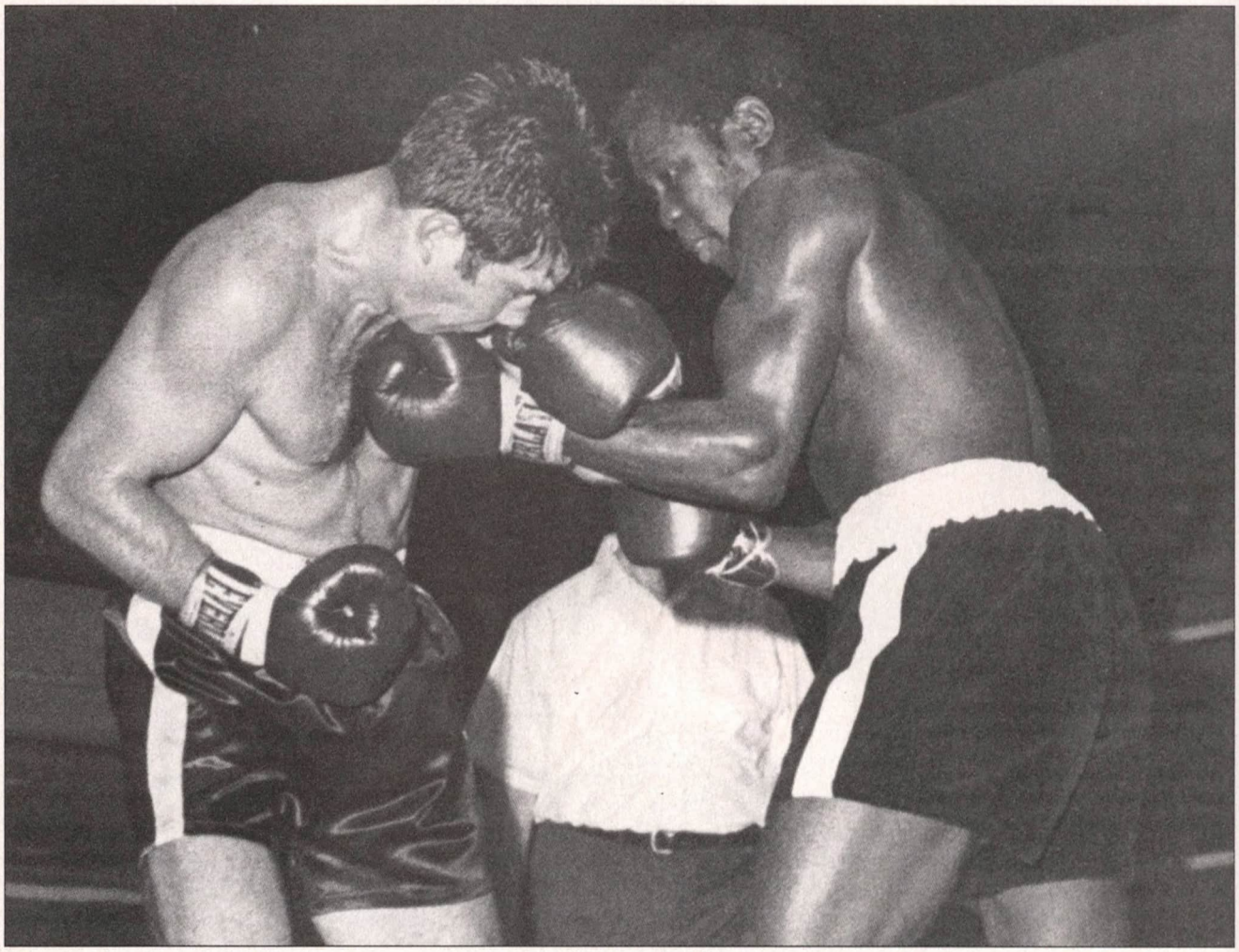
The DeNucci story really begins when he was a boy watching his father, a YMCA maintenance worker, give boxing lessons for $1.25.

"I didn't like seeing my father take punches for $1.25," said DeNucci, "but he liked giving kids confidence. He never wanted me to be a fighter, but I saw a lot of the local amateurs and pros. I wasn't impressed with any of them. That's how it started."

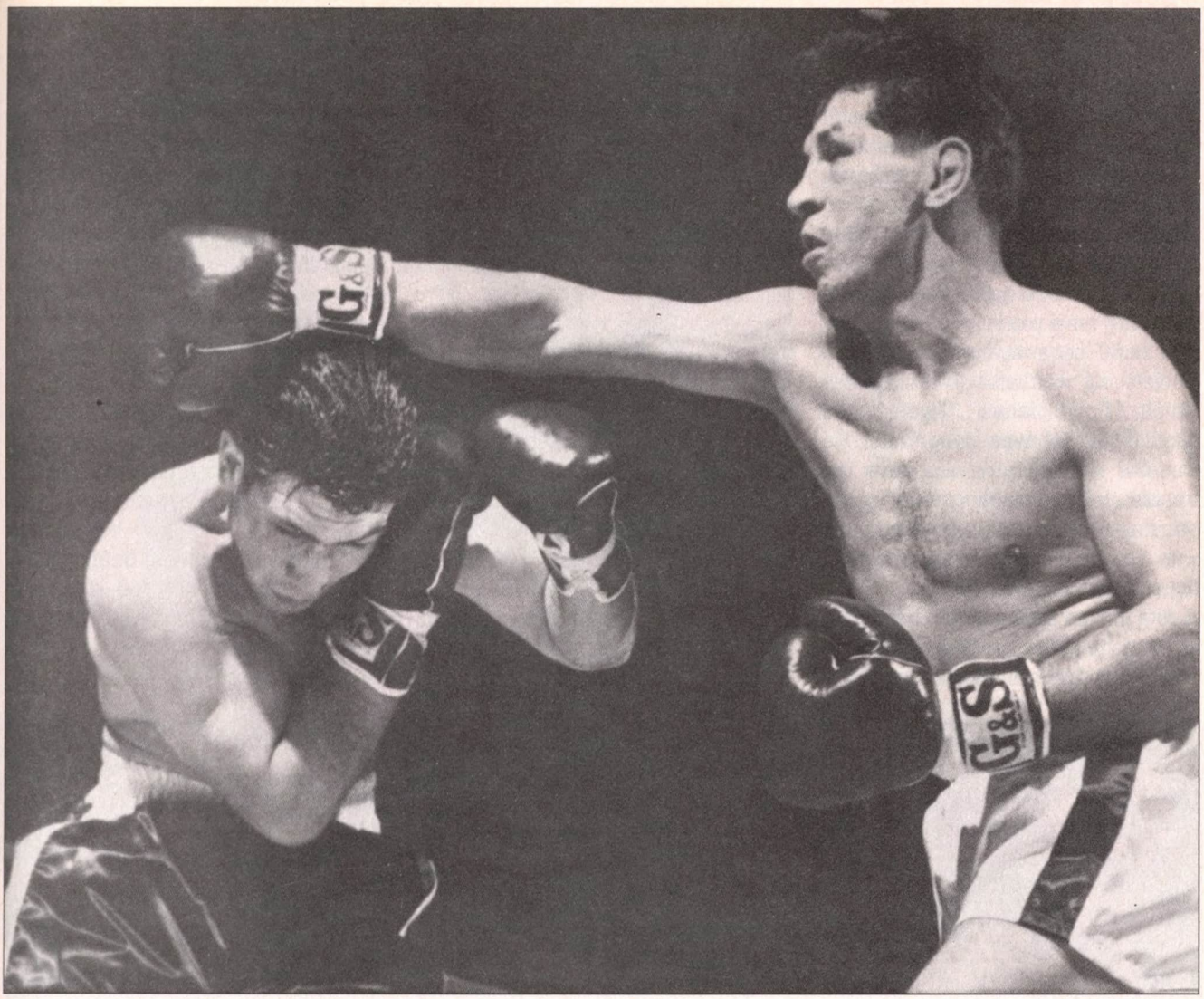
DeNucci, who was raised in Nonantum, a working-class Italian neighborhood in Newton, was inspired by his father's work ethic. "He had tremendous values. He always took me to the YMCA, so I had an advantage that other kids didn't have. The Y had a big effect on the life I live today. I was lucky to have a place to learn how to be strong and to have endurance."

But even as DeNucci was learning the Sweet Science, his second career was already taking shape. He was a high school student fighting in the local Golden Gloves when he was introduced to then-Speaker of the House John Forbes Thompson, a colorful Boston character known as "The Iron Duke."

"Thompson saw me fight, and ask-



DeNucci takes a left from future Hall of Fame Emile Griffith during the second of their two 1972 bouts in Boston. DeNucci lost both via split decision and while he still believes he was robbed, he doesn't spend much time dwelling on it.



DeNucci, who considered himself a good defensive fighter, ducks under a right hand thrown by future middleweight champion Joey Giardello. The 1961 bout was ruled a draw, and while Giardello went on the win the 160-pound title in '63, DeNucci never got a title shot.

ed me, 'How would you like to be my pageboy?' If I were not a fighter, it wouldn't have happened," said DeNucci.

DeNucci started as a page, and later became a court officer. He worked at the State House by day, and he trained and boxed at night. The schedule was grueling, but this was the tail end of Boston's Golden Era, when the city hosted fights almost weekly. "People forget that boxing was huge," said DeNucci, who remembers when THE RING's top contenders could be recited like the teams in a pennant race. When he recalls another popular Boston fighter, his eyes dampen.

"The best thing that ever happened to me was Tony DeMarco," said DeNucci, "fighting on the undercards of his fights. One day after we'd both quit, he called me from Las Vegas and said, 'Joe, I'm dying down here. I want to come back to Boston, but I don't know if I can find work." DeNucci pulled some strings and got DeMarco a job as a court officer. "I was so happy to help him out because he'd been very important to me."

DeMarco also admires DeNucci. "I've known him since he was 15," DeMarco said. "He was a kid following me around the gym. I'd been the welterweight champion, so he looked up to me. Then Joe became a very good fighter. I've gone from calling him 'Kid' to 'Joe' to 'Mr. State Auditor.' He's tremendous."

During DeNucci's era, three promoters ruled Boston: Rip Valenti, Johnny Buckley, and Sam Silverman.

"Rip never put anybody in the satchel for me, because I never won a goddamned close decision in my hometown," said DeNucci, laughing at the injustice of it all. "Never. When one of Johnny Buckley's fighters went down, the lights went off in the arena. Me, I got draws and lost split decisions in my hometown.

"Sam lived, ate, and slept boxing 25 hours a day. You'd say, 'Hey Sam, you think the Red Sox are going to win the Series?' He'd say, 'You know, Ted Williams is a big boxing fan.' Any conversation came back to boxing. He was unbelievable. One fight I was supposed to get 20 percent of the gate. When he paid me he said the attendance was only 6,600 people. I'd say, 'Sam, the place was packed.' He'd say, 'That place has more holes than a Swiss cheese.' Holy Jesus, everybody was a partner, including the ushers.

That was Sam. He was the best."

DeNucci's first sense of his potential was when he scored a knockout over a tough journeyman named Jackson Brown. There were also wins over Joey Giambra, Denny Moyer, and Tony Dupas. There were two tough fights with Chico Vejar, and a horrible decision loss to Don Fullmer. "My worst fight ever," DeNucci said of Fullmer. "He was a terrible guy to fight. He'd have you in a headlock, then he'd be 50 feet away from you."

DeNucci was also 1-1-1 against Ralph "Tiger" Jones. "Tiger Jones could fight. He was dangerous. He was the kind off guy who gave me trouble. I loved fighting taller guys, because I could get under. The guys who bothered me were busy inside. Jones was that type of guy."

But just as DeNucci was becoming a presence in the sport, he stumbled. From May 1963 to December 1964, he won only once during a nine-fight stretch.

"I'll tell you what happened," DeNucci said. "Making the weight and taking amphetamines. I wasn't myself. To fight Florentino Fernandez, in 3½ weeks I took off 35 pounds. I could barely keep my hands up. It was awful. I had to get out of boxing to get off that s_ _ _."

A doctor had prescribed the pills, but they ruined DeNucci's nerves. "It was awful. I destroyed myself. That's what happened to me. Now I'll talk to any kid and explain the dangers of that stuff."

DeNucci returned After a 15-month break. By the time he retired from boxing at 33, he'd posted a record of 54-15-4 (27).

His career ended one night in France, where DeNucci was a TKO victim of Jean-Claude Bouttier. The final fight was a disaster, plagued not only by travel problems, but DeNucci's growing sense that he had become an "opponent." DeNucci said, "When that last fight was stopped. I thought, *Thank God.*"

DeNucci knew he was done, but unlike most fighters, he was not lost in retirement. Within three years, DeNucci was elected to the Massachusetts House of Representatives. He was soon known as one of the hardest-working men in the House. Calling himself "the watchdog for the underdog," his concerns were the elderly, the poor, and the disabled. He helped push through a landmark bill that forced reluctant social workers to report child abuse to local lawmen. DeNucci said in an interview at the time, "I had stories brought to me of severe beatings and sexual abuse right in the kids' own homes." Recalling his own upbringing DeNucci said, "If you did that to a neighbor's kid, you'd go to the can.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

DeNucci, along with former welterweight champion and good friend Tony DeMarco, chat with Ray Leonard when* The Contender *came to Boston in November 2007 for the finals of Season Three. DeNucci was an amateur when he first met DeMarco.

PHOTO BY EMILY HARNEY

DeNucci is in his sixth term as auditor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He started his government career while still in high school and boxing as an amateur. He also spent 10 years in the Massachusetts House of Representatives.

So, c'mon, cut it out."

When DeNucci decided to run for auditor of the Commonwealth in 1986, he made the announcement in Lowell, where he'd won the Lowell Golden Gloves 30 years earlier. He'd never lost a fight in Lowell, so he felt compelled to begin his campaign in the old fight town. "I'm a little superstitious," he said, "like my mother."

"I'm an elected state officer in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. I spent 10 years in the House of Representatives. I'm unique in that I had both sides of the fence. Boxing never hurt my public career, not once. Sometimes a political opponent might say, 'DeNucci is just a punch-drunk old fighter,' but that's rare. I was active in my community, people knew me. I've always been honest and truthful. If you try to hide things, people don't appreciate it."

DeNucci may have lost a lot of close ones in the ring, but on Beacon Hill he's determined to score knockouts every time. His primary responsibility as state auditor is to make sure that public funds are spent "legally, wisely, and for the purposes intended." He claims his audits have identified tremendous cost savings and revenue enhancement opportunities. He's also stumped for gay rights, and has actively encouraged the state to boost fuel aid for the poor. Most recently Governor Deval Patrick named DeNucci as part of a seven-member gaming authority to oversee the operation of a proposed Massachusetts casino. *Boston Herald* columnist Joe Fitzgerald referred to DeNucci as "the kind of incumbent favored here where an enthusiasm exists for public servants who actually care about the public."

DeNucci, 68, likes to say, "I'm only here because I'm not all there." It's a boxing joke. He makes a lot of them. But boxing is very close to his heart.

"I fought 17 years," he said. "I came out of it okay. I made a good reputation for myself that helped me here. My situation was okay, but it was always 'You gotta win this one, and then you'll get a title shot.' Then I'd get screwed on the decision. But I hung in there.

"I came from a life that wasn't easy. Boxing absolutely prepared me for the State House. Number one, you have to make sacrifices and work hard. And work smart. Give it all you got. There's no in between. That's life, not just boxing. I don't know which is tougher, fighting a top guy or fighting the weasels out here, but I should be an example for fighters because I prove there is life after boxing.

"One of the best things that happened to me was when I met a former amateur champion, Lou Barazano. My father taught me how to defend myself, but Lou taught me that if you want to be a fighter, don't be a sucker. Don't take two punches to land one. He taught me how to box and protect myself. Maybe I wasn't the most exciting fighter in the world, but I beat a lot of good fighters and I never got hurt. I didn't take punches. I knew how to slip and duck. I was pretty good. Yeah, some guys can give you a great fight. Jesus, did you see *The Contender*? They [Sakio Bika and Jaidon Codrington] killed each other. How many fights do you think they'll have? Do you think they'll have as many as I had? It was crazy. It's a dangerous business. I came out in pretty good shape, thank God."

DeNucci and his wife, Barbara, have five children and 13 grandchildren. At a recent State House Christmas party, as a local choir sang holiday tunes, DeNucci strolled through the room like a beaming grandfather, kissing foreheads and shaking hands. Watching DeNucci with his friends and co-workers, one realizes the words shouted by Sandy and Rocky at the Garden are finally true.

You won, Joe. You won! ■

Don Stradley is a freelance writer from Massachusetts and a regular contributor to THE RING.

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Back issues of several editions of *KO Magazine*, the acknowledged leader in boxing journalism, are still available in limited quantity. Since its inception in 1980, *KO* has become known for its quality stories and columns and peak-action photographs. Don't delay. Supplies are running out!

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Holiday 1998: Toe-To-Toe With The Top 10: Where Does Tyson Fit In? Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Inteview: Larry Hazzard. Also: Evander Holyfield, junior middleweights.

Jan. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Oscar Eliminates Chavez ... Now The Real Fights Begin! Color Pinup: Yory Boy Campas. Interview: William Joppy. Also: Mark Johnson, U.S.A. vs. the world.

Feb. 1999: Holyfield & Lewis: Did They Hurt Themselves Before They Could Hurt Each Other? Color Pinup: Andrew Golota. Interview: Angel Manfredy. Also: Mismatches, Bobby Czyz on watching fights.

March 1999: Exposed! Is Hamed Really Hector Camacho In Disguise? Color Pinup: Mike Tyson. Interview: Joe Frazier. Also: Zab Judah, Vuyani Bungu, Frankie Randall.

May 1999: The Tyson Of Old ... Or Just An Old Tyson? Color Pinup: Luisito Espinosa. Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Antonio Diaz, Sumya Anani, standing eight-count.

June 1999: Will Tyson's Jail Time Be A Career Killer? Color Pinup: Johnny Tapia. Interview: Floyd Mayweather. Also: Roy Jones, 1999 Hall of Fame.

July 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: The Fight The Public Demands ... But Is It Going To Happen? Color Pinup: David Tua. Interview: Tommy Brooks. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Tony Marshall, best of the century.

Aug. 1999: Lewis vs. Holyfield II: Should We Expect Anything Different Next Time? Color Pinup: Fernando Vargas. Interview: David Reid. Also: Ibeabuchi-Byrd, Melissa Salamone.

Sept. 1999: Mayweather vs. Mosley: Who's The Future Of Boxing? Color Pinup: James Page. Interview: J Russell Peltz. Also: Evander Holyfield, Thomas Hearns, Angel Manfredy.

Oct. 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Felix Trinidad. Interview: Jake LaMotta. Also: Tony Ayala, Erik Morales, Junior Jones.

Nov. 1999: De La Hoya vs. Trinidad: "It's Gonna Come Down To Who The Hell Wants It Most!" Color Pinup: David Reid. Interview: Arturo Gatti. Also: Roy Jones, Sugar Shane Mosley, Vassily Jirov.

Dec. 1999: David Reid & Fernando Vargas: Olympic Teammates On A Collision Course! Color Pinup: Zab Judah. Interview: Ike Ibeabuchi. Also: Vitali Klitschko, Antonio Tarver, Mike Tyson.

Holiday 1999 (Special 88-Page Edition): Lewis-Holyfield II: Why We Demand A Knockout! Color Pinup: Sharmba Mitchell. Interview: Paulie Ayala. Also: James Toney, James Page & Terronn Millett, decade review.

Jan. 2000: Fool's Gold? Trinidad May Have Tarnished Oscar's Image Forever! Color Pinup: Paulie Ayala. Interview: Tony Ayala Jr. Also: David Reid, Johnny Nelson.

Feb. 2000: Breakout 2000: Who's Going To Lead The Way In Y2K? Color Pinup: Roy Jones. Interview: Bob Arum. Also: Shane Mosley, Wise-Chavez, Iran Barkley.

March 2000: Mike Tyson: "I'm Tired Of This Crap!" So Are We, Mike! Color Pinup: Vernon Forrest. Interview: James Page. Also: Erik Morales & Naseem Hamed, Diego Corrales, women's boxing.

May 2000: Michael Grant vs. Lennox Lewis—25 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Paul Spadafora. Interview: Dan Goossen. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Johnny Tapia, southpaws.

June 2000: Lewis vs. Grant: Who Will Win ... And Why. Color Pinup: Vitali Klitschko. Interview: Sharmba Mitchell. Also: Shane Mosley, David Izon, 2000 Hall of Fame.

July 2000: Today's Fighters, Tomorrow's Hall Of Famers. Color Pinup: Keith Holmes. Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Zab Judah, Morales-Barrera, Wayne Braithwaite.

Aug. 2000: Mosley Prepares For Oscar: "It Will Be Like The First Round Of Hagler-Hearns." Color Pinup: Steve Johnston. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Vargas-Quartey, Thomas Hearns, Felix Trinidad, common sense vs. cowardice.

Sept. 2000: Now Vargas Is Ready For Trinidad & De La Hoya. Color Pinup: Erik Morales. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Trinidad vs. all-time greats, Thomas Hearns, common sense vs. cowardice.

Oct. 2000 (Special 88-Page Edition): The *KO* 100. Color Pinup: Floyd Mayweather. Interview: Stevie Johnston. Also: Clifford Etienne, overhyped heavyweights.

Nov. 2000: Sugar Rush! Mosley Achieves Superstardom At Oscar's Expense. Color Pinup: Lennox Lewis. Interview: Jay Larkin. Also: David Tua, Oleg Maskaev, Ben Tackie.

Dec. 2000: Mike Tyson vs. Lennox Lewis: 15 Insiders Pick The Winner. Color Pinup: Shane Mosley. Interview: Frank Maloney. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Bronco McKart, our heroes' heroes. [FULL-COLOR BEGINNING FEBRUARY 2001]

Feb. 2001: Fernando Vargas' Internal Battle: If He Can't Win It, He Can't Beat Trinidad. Interview: Evander Holyfield. Also: Derrick Gainer, Roy Jones, Naseem Hamed.

April 2001: Lewis Is Too Much For Tua ... But Could Tyson Do Any Better? Interview: Max Kellerman. Also: Floyd Mayweather, Wladimir Klitschko.

June 2001: Trinidad-Jones: Superfight Or Mismatch? Interview: Virgil Hill. Also: Mayweather-Corrales, Paul Ingle, Davey Hilton, Tyson's relationship with Vargas, Judah, and Mayweather.

Aug. 2001: Sugar Shane Mosley: Too Sweet For The Bad Boy Era? Interview: Richard Steele. Also: Evander Holyfield, Roy Jones, Jesus Chavez.

Oct. 2001: Tito Power—From Fans To Foes ... Everyone's Feeling It! Interview: Lou DiBella. Also: Hasim Rahman, Vargas-Rivera, F.I.S.T.

Dec. 2001: Laila Ali: The Fighter, The Sex Symbol ... The Future Of Women's Boxing? Interview: Laila Ali. Also: Oscar De La Hoya, Tim Austin, Manny Pacquiao, Hector Camacho Jr.

Feb. 2002: Bernard Hopkins: "I Am The American Dream. I Am The American Story." Interview: Wladimir Klitschko. Also: Omar Sheika, Vernon Forrest, Juan Lazcano.

April 2002: After Hitting Rock Bottom ... Lennox Is Back On The Path To Greatness. Interview: Duva Boxing. Also: Zab Judah, Mike Tyson, Thomas Tate.

June 2002: Tyson vs. Lewis: 10-Page Preview & Analysis. Interview: Jameel McCline. Also: *Ali* movie, Dorin vs. Balbi & Ward vs. Leija.

Aug. 2002: Still Crazy After All These Years: Should Mike Tyson Be Allowed To Fight? Interview: Kostya Tszyu. Also: Barrera-Morales II preview, Ayala-Adams, Ricky Hatton.

Oct. 2002: Vernon Forrest vs. Shane Mosley: Two Careers On The Line! Interview: Fernando Vargas. Also: Mayweather-Castillo, Hopkins vs. all-time greats, heavyweight scrap heap.

Dec. 2002: Wladimir Klitschko: Would He Be Too Much For Lennox? Interview: Joe Calzaghe. Also: Barrera-Morales II, Evander Holyfield, Freddie Roach.

Winter 2002: A Realistic Look At Tyson's Comeback: He Can't Make History, But He Can Make Millions. Interview: Micky Ward. Also: Antonio Tarver, Antwun Echols, Acelino Freitas.

March 2003: Oscar De La Hoya—The War That Rages Within. Interview: Klitschko brothers. Also: Kassim Ouma, Eric Morel, holiday gifts.

May 2003: Danger Zone! Will Roy Jones Be Doomed By His Heavyweight Ego? Interview: Buddy McGirt. Also: Gatti-Ward II, Floyd Mayweather, Erik Morales.

July 2003: Boxing's Biggest X-Factor: Can Hopkins Recover From His Self-Inflicted Wounds? Interview: Shane Mosley. Also: Kostya Tszyu, DaVarryl Williamson, 10 best defensive fighters.

Sept. 2003: Sugar Roy? How Jones Rates With The All-Time Greats. Interview: Chris Byrd. Also: Corrie Sanders, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Kermit Cintron.

Nov. 2003: De La Hoya-Mosley II: Will Three Years And Seven Pounds Make A Difference? Interview: James Toney. Also: Michael Watson, Erik Morales, Jones-Holyfield head-to-head.

Winter 2003: *KO* Interview Arturo Gatti: "Kostya Tszyu Needs Me More Than I Need Him." Also: Mayorga-Forrest II, Zab Judah, Corrales-Casamayor preview, Joe Calzaghe.

Feb. 2004: Shane Mosley: A Second Chance At Superstardom. Interview: Bernard Hopkins. Also: Laila Ali, Scott LeDoux, retirement.

April 2004: Human After All: Tarver Makes Jones Turn To Tyson. Interview: Emanuel Steward. Also: Sharmba Mitchell, Toney-McCline preview, trash-talking.

June 2004: What Could Tyson Do To Jones? Interview: Antonio Tarver. Also: Bernard Hopkins, Spinks-Mayorga.

Oct. 2004: Dr. Klitschko: The Perfect Band-Aid For The Heavyweight Division. Interview: Diego Corrales. Also: Monte Barrett, Cory Spinks, Vinny Paz & Sven Ottke.

Feb. 2005: Exclusive KO Interview—Manny Pacquiao. Also: Kostya Tszyu, Manning Galloway, quitting, perfect heavyweight.

June 2005: Heavyweight Champ Vitali Klitschko: He's A Lot Better Than You Think! Interview: John Ruiz & Norman Stone. Also: Glen Johnson, 2004 in review.

Oct. 2005: El Feroz With A Twist: Re-tooled Vargas Gets Defensive. Interview: Zab Judah. Also: Marco Antonio Barrera, Jean-Marc Mormeck, Julio Cesar Chavez Jr., *KO* at 25.

Feb. 2006: Can Hip Hop Revitalize Boxing? Interview: Erik Morales. Also: Zab Judah, Ricardo Mayorga, Arturo Gatti, Luis Collazo, Roman Karmazin.

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☐DEC/96	☐NOV/98	☐OCT/99	☐SEP/00	☐APR/02	☐WIN/03
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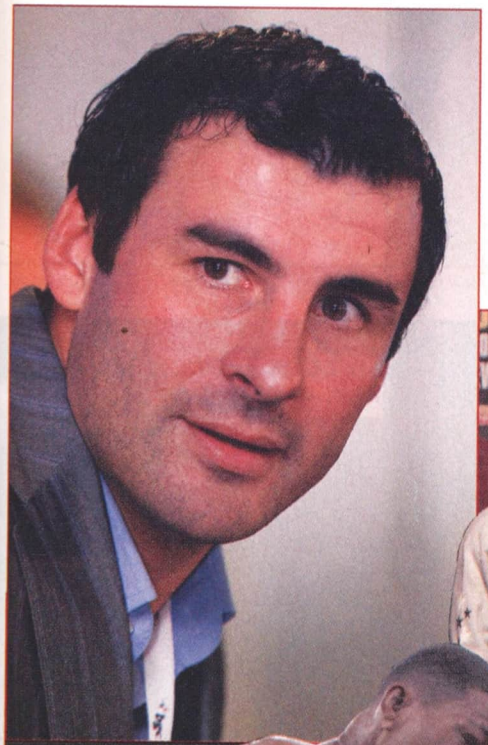
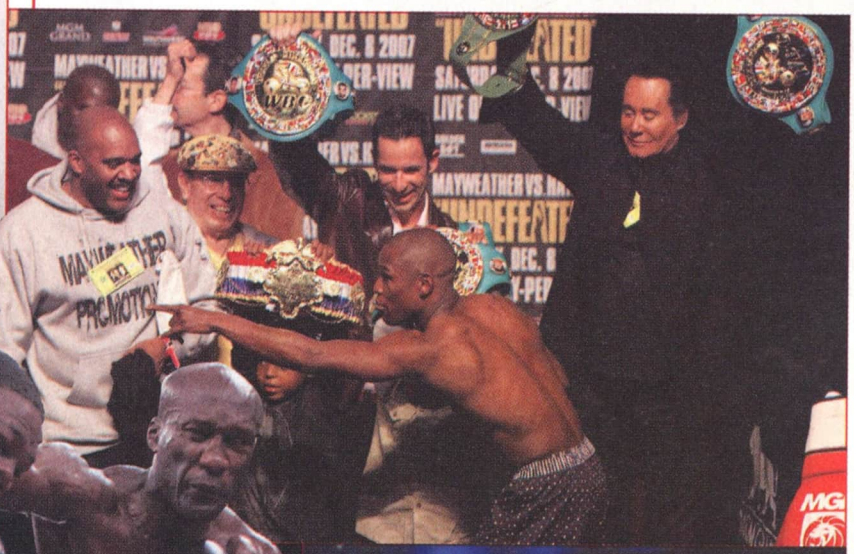
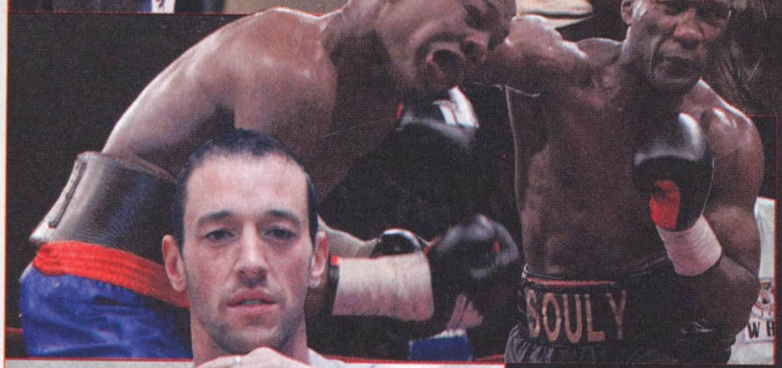
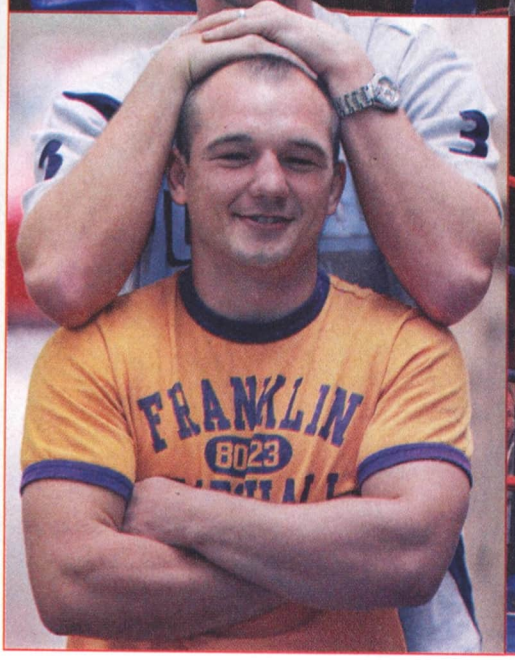
THE YEAR IN PICTURES



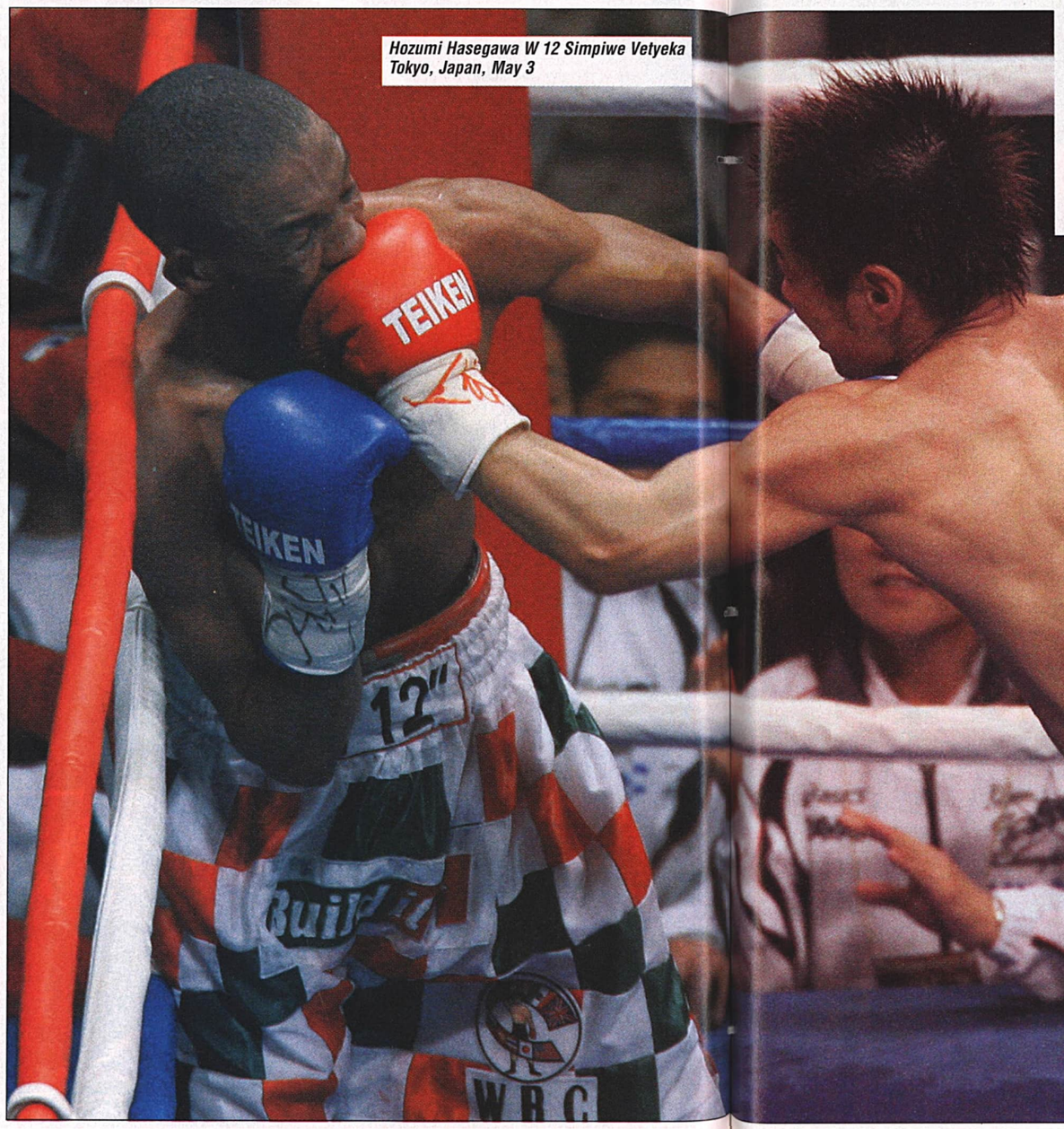




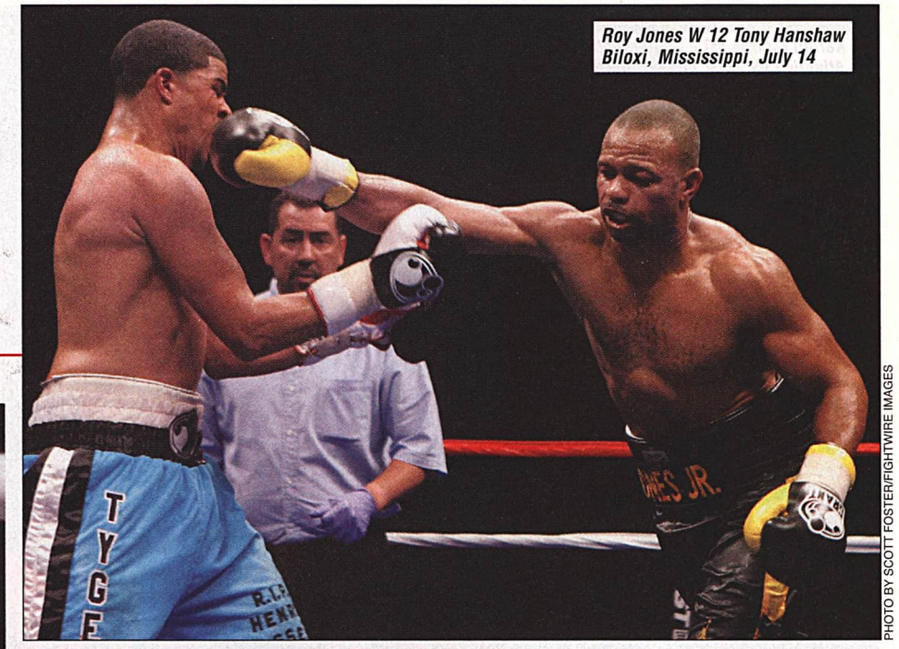


POWER PUNCH

Forget all the talk about ring generalship, defense, psychological warfare, and the subtle nuances of the Sweet Science. When you get down to the nitty-gritty, there's nothing more important than an old-fashioned punch upside the head. It's what attracts folks to boxing in the first place and ultimately what keeps them coming back. Very few fighters are blessed with one-punch knockout power, but they all share one thing in common: the desire to belt the other guy as hard and as often as possible. These images are vivid examples of what happens when they succeed.



Hozumi Hasegawa W 12 Simpiwe Vetyeka
Tokyo, Japan, May 3



Roy Jones W 12 Tony Hanshaw
Biloxi, Mississippi, July 14

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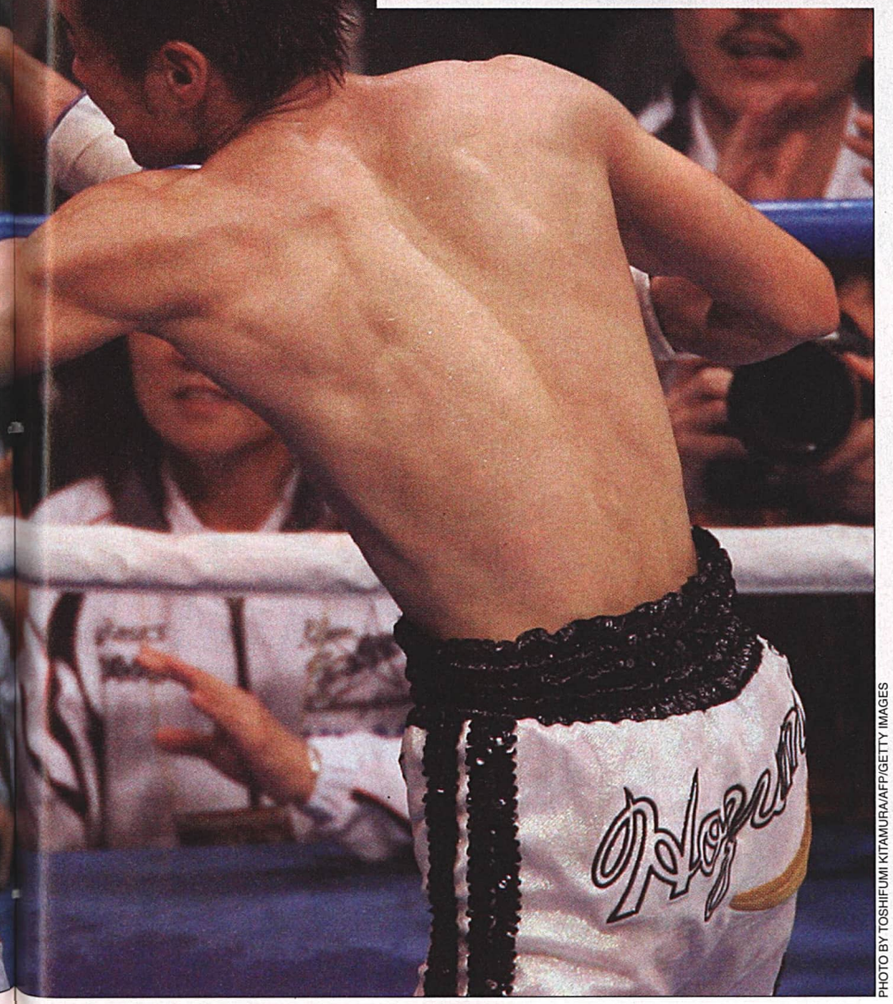

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Kermit Cintron KO 2 Walter Mathysse
Atlantic City, New Jersey, July 14

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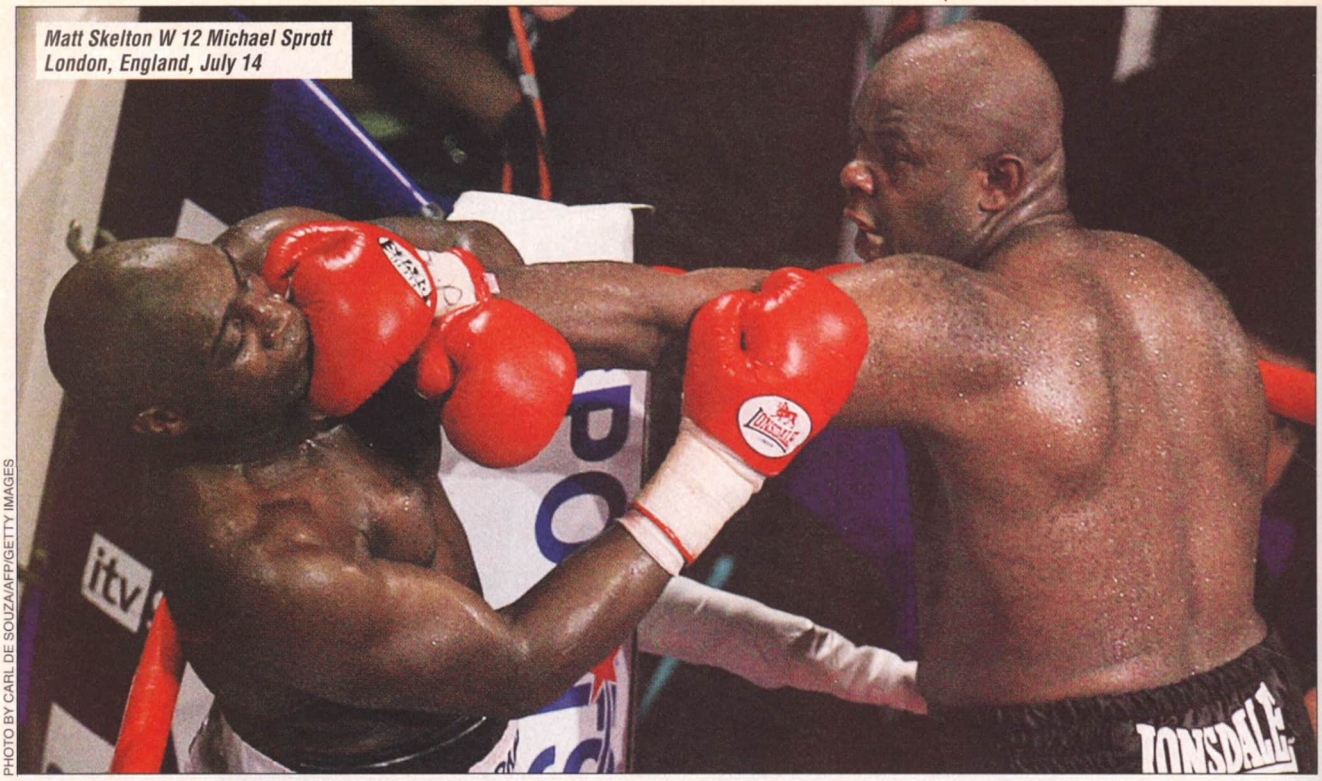

Matt Skelton W 12 Michael Sprott
London, England, July 14

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Antonio Margarito KO 1 Golden Johnson
New York City, November 10

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Nate Campbell KO 6 Wilson Alcorro
Tampa, Florida, July 6

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Dean Francis W 12 Michael Gbenga
Bolton, England, December 8

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Manny Pacquiao W 12 Marco Antonio Barrera
Las Vegas, October 6

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Luan Krasniqi W 12 Brian Minto
Stuttgart, Germany, March 17

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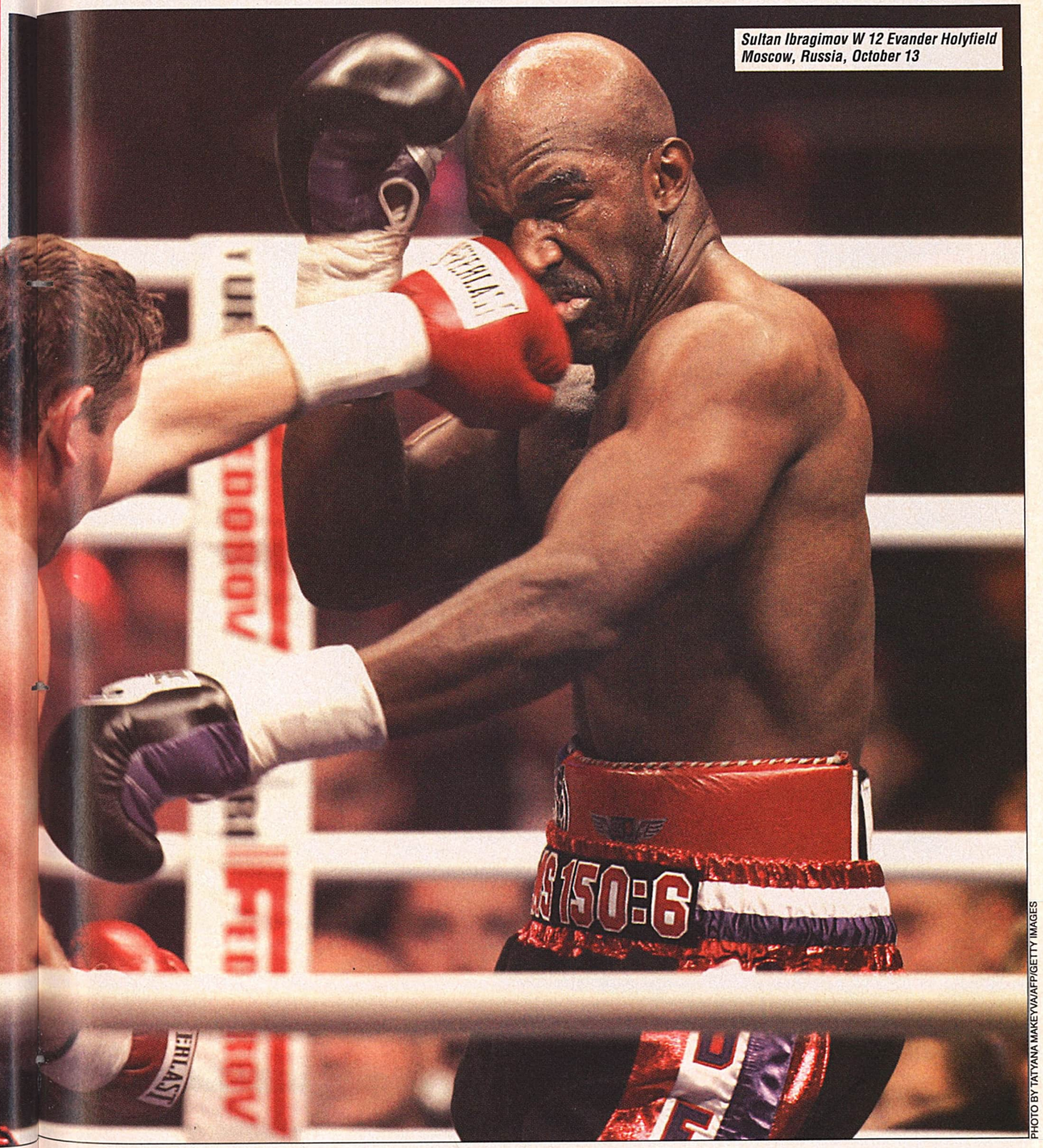

Sultan Ibragimov W 12 Evander Holyfield
Moscow, Russia, October 13

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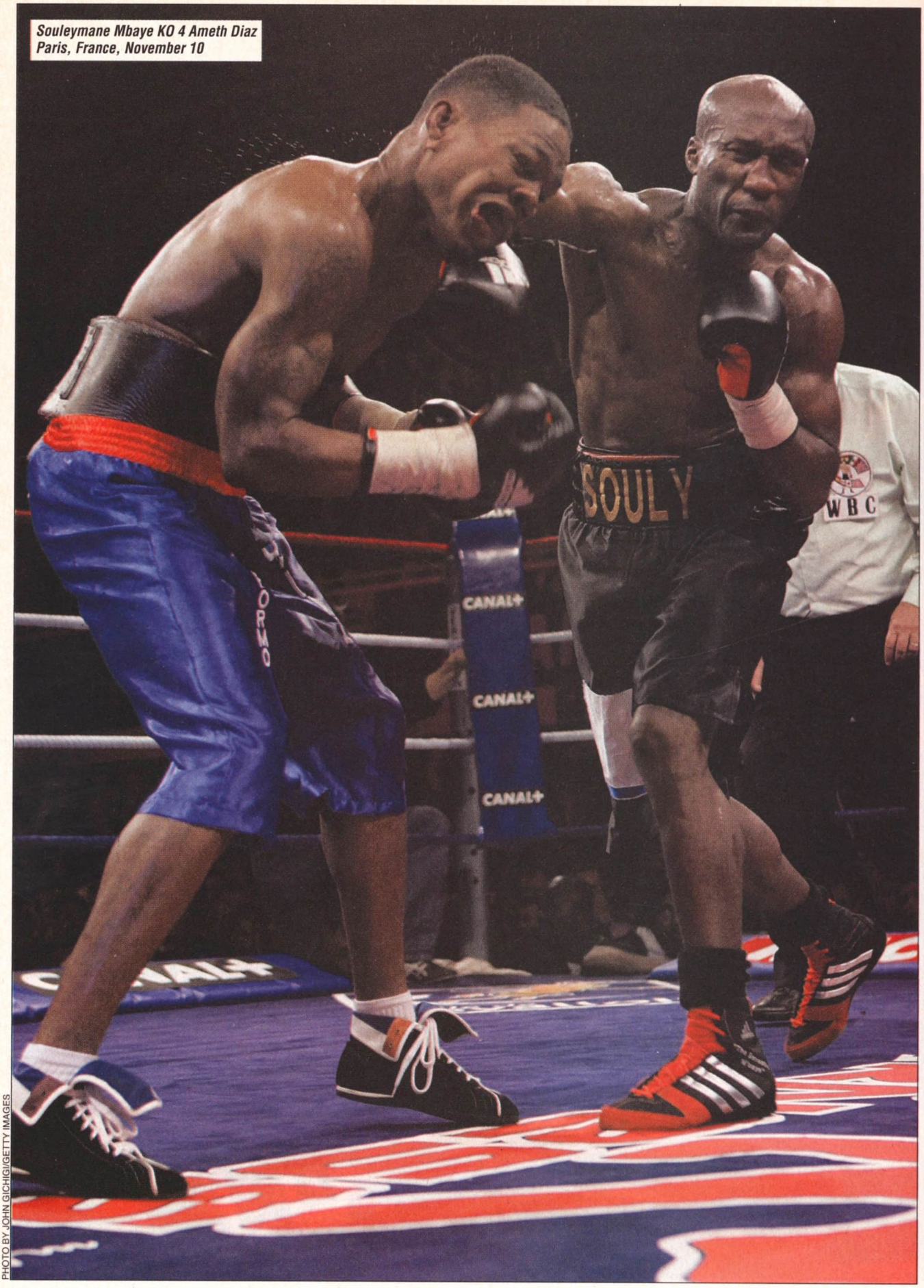

Souleymane Mbaye KO 4 Ameth Diaz
Paris, France, November 10

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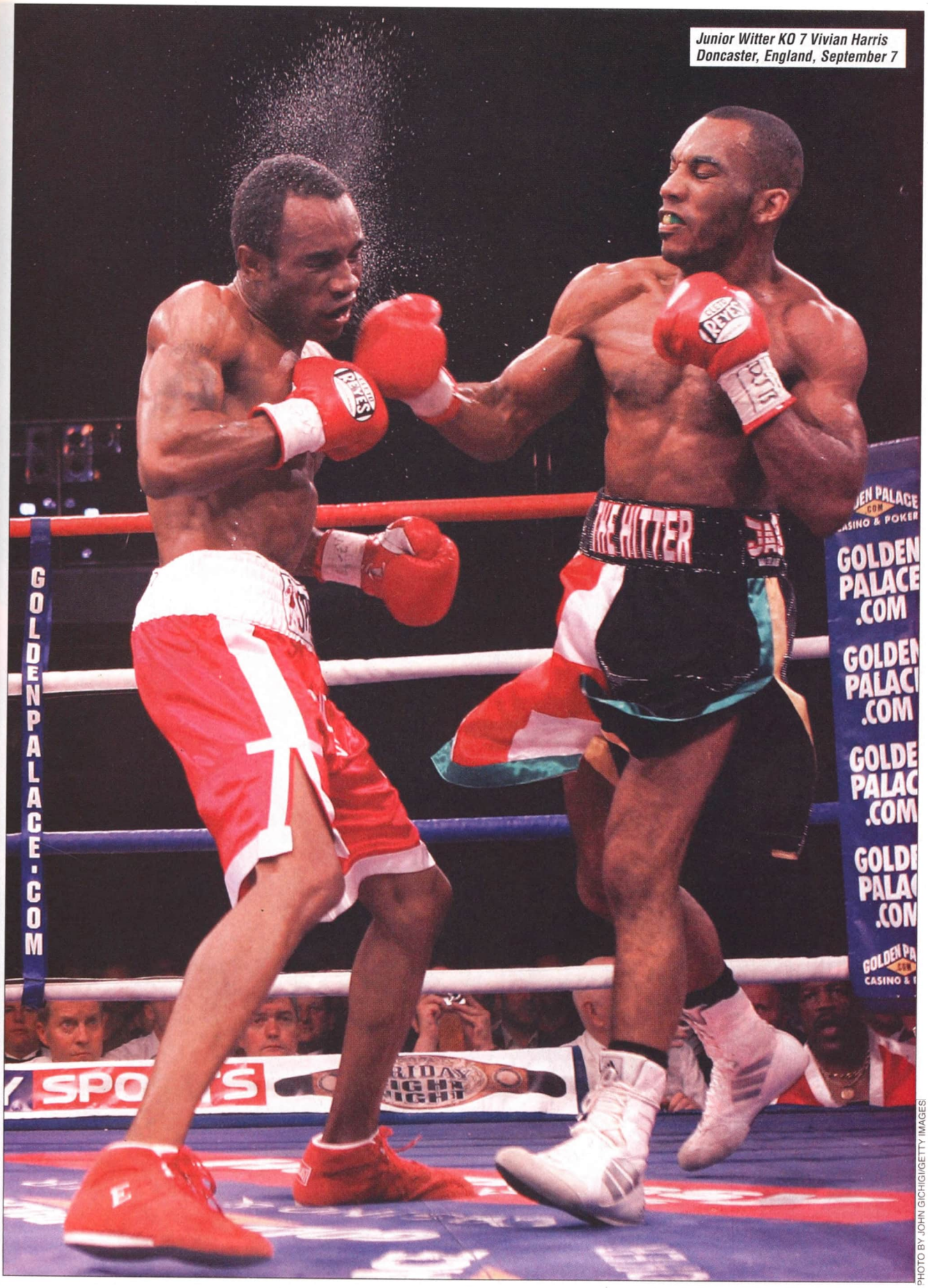

Junior Witter KO 7 Vivian Harris
Doncaster, England, September 7

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Librado Andrade KO 7 Yusaf Mack
Las Vegas, Nevada, October 6

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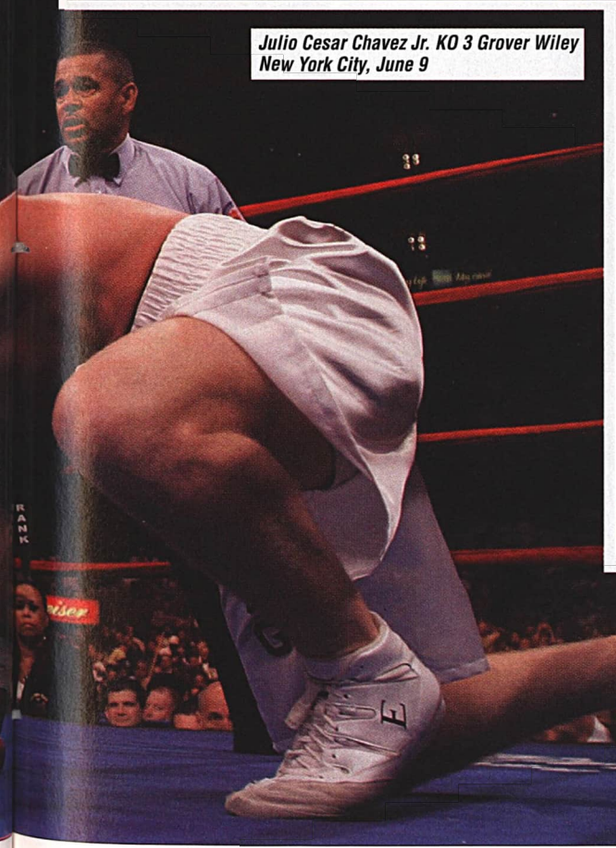
THE MOMENT OF TRUTH

One fighter tumbles headfirst to the canvas, another struggles to regain his feet, while a third looks up from the floor and sees his tormentor hovering above him, ready to strike again. Yet another slumps on his stool, sinking into darkness. The climactic moment of the fight has arrived, the struggle decided. One man wins, the other loses. It's all over.

Ricky Hatton KO 4 Jose Luis Castillo
Las Vegas, June 23

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES



Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. KO 3 Grover Wiley
New York City, June 9

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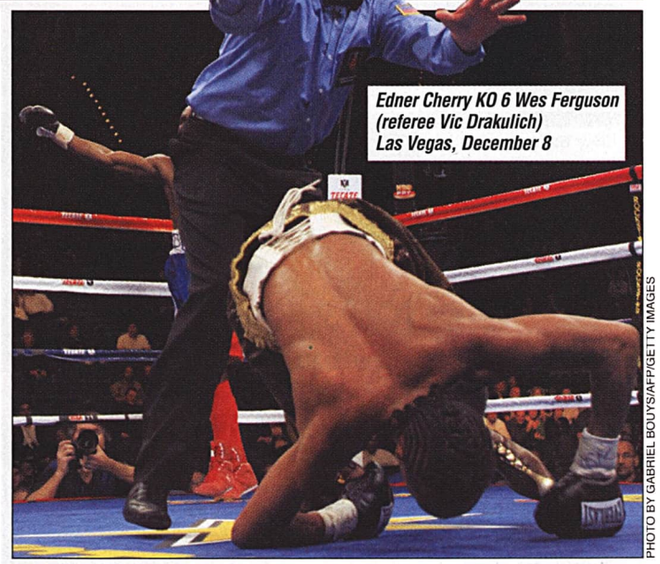

Edner Cherry KO 6 Wes Ferguson
(referee Vic Drakulich)
Las Vegas, December 8

PHOTO BY GABRIEL BOUYS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Daniel Santos KO 8 Jose Antonio Rivera
New York City, October 6

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Ricky Hatton
Las Vegas, December 8

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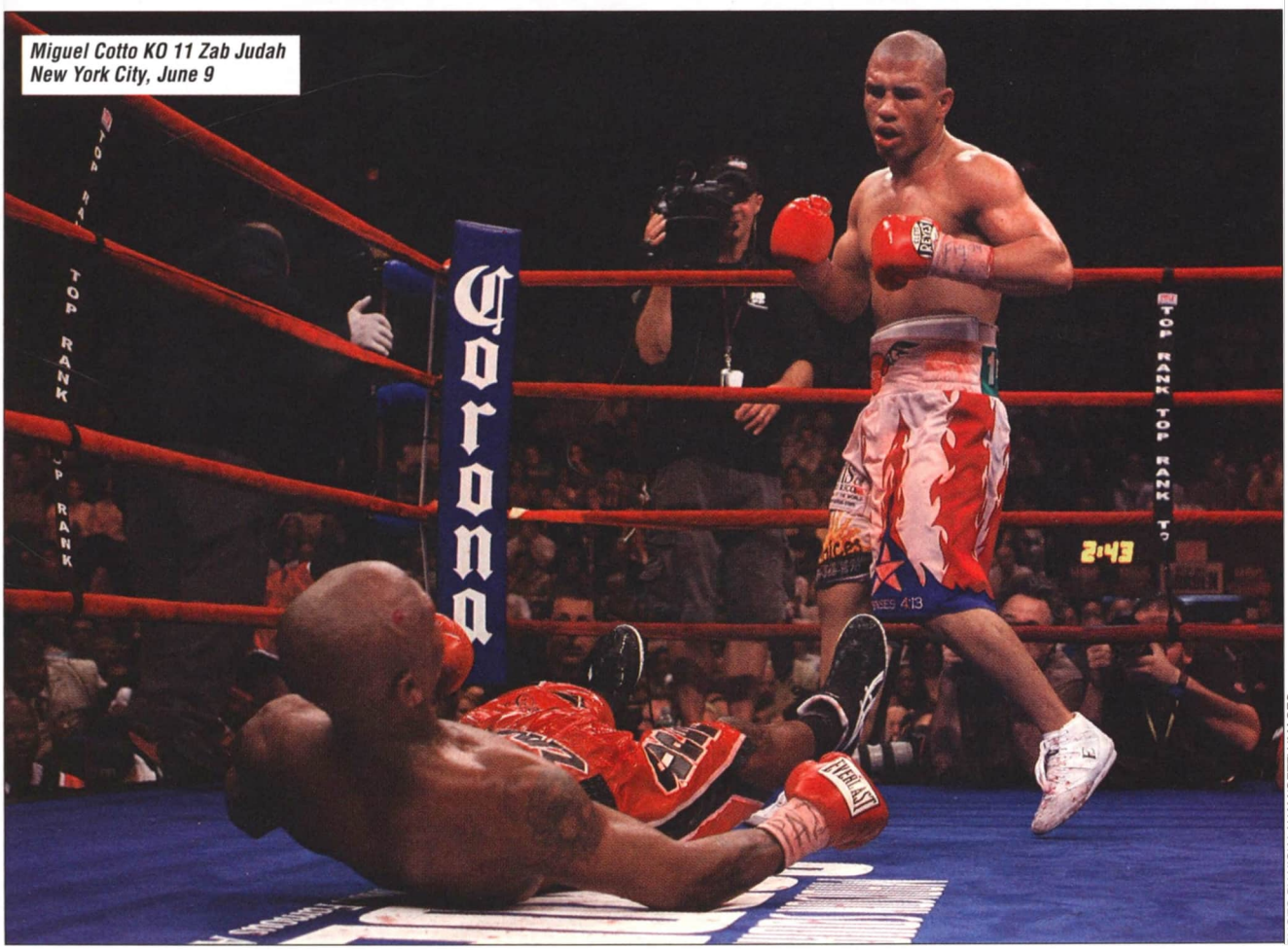
Victor Burgos
Carson, California, March 3

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS



Miguel Cotto KO 11 Zab Judah
New York City, June 9

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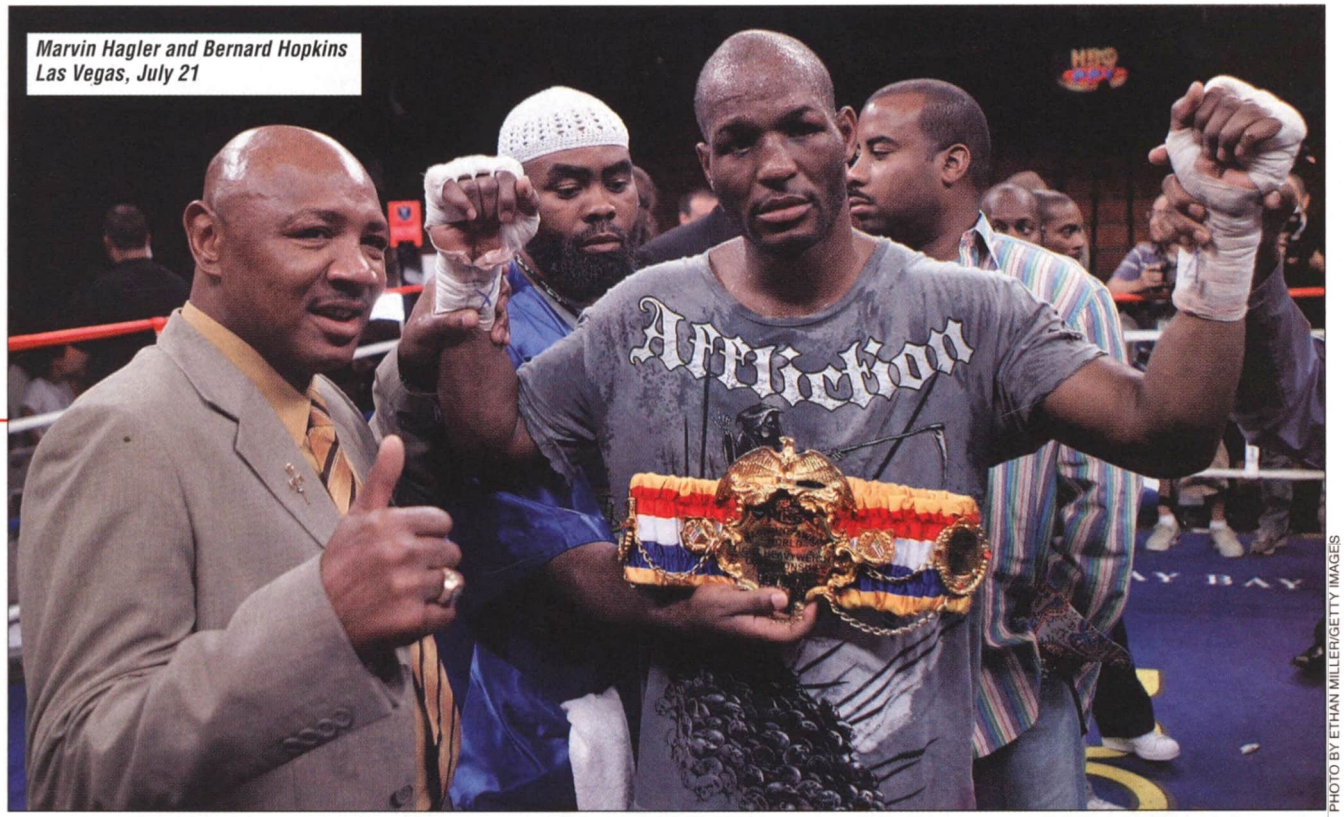
THE HARDEST BELT TO WIN

Israel Vazquez
Los Angeles, California,
October

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

Barring a draw, on March 15, either Manny Pacquiao or Juan Manuel Marquez will strap THE RING 130-pound championship belt around his waist and join boxing's most exclusive club—a club with only 10 members. They are the reigning world champions, fighters who stand out among the tens of thousands around the world as the precious few who have risen to the highest plateau of their profession. The rarity of the belt they wear is an indicator of its authenticity.



Marvin Hagler and Bernard Hopkins
Las Vegas, July 21

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Floyd Mayweather
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
February 21

PHOTO BY STU SAKS

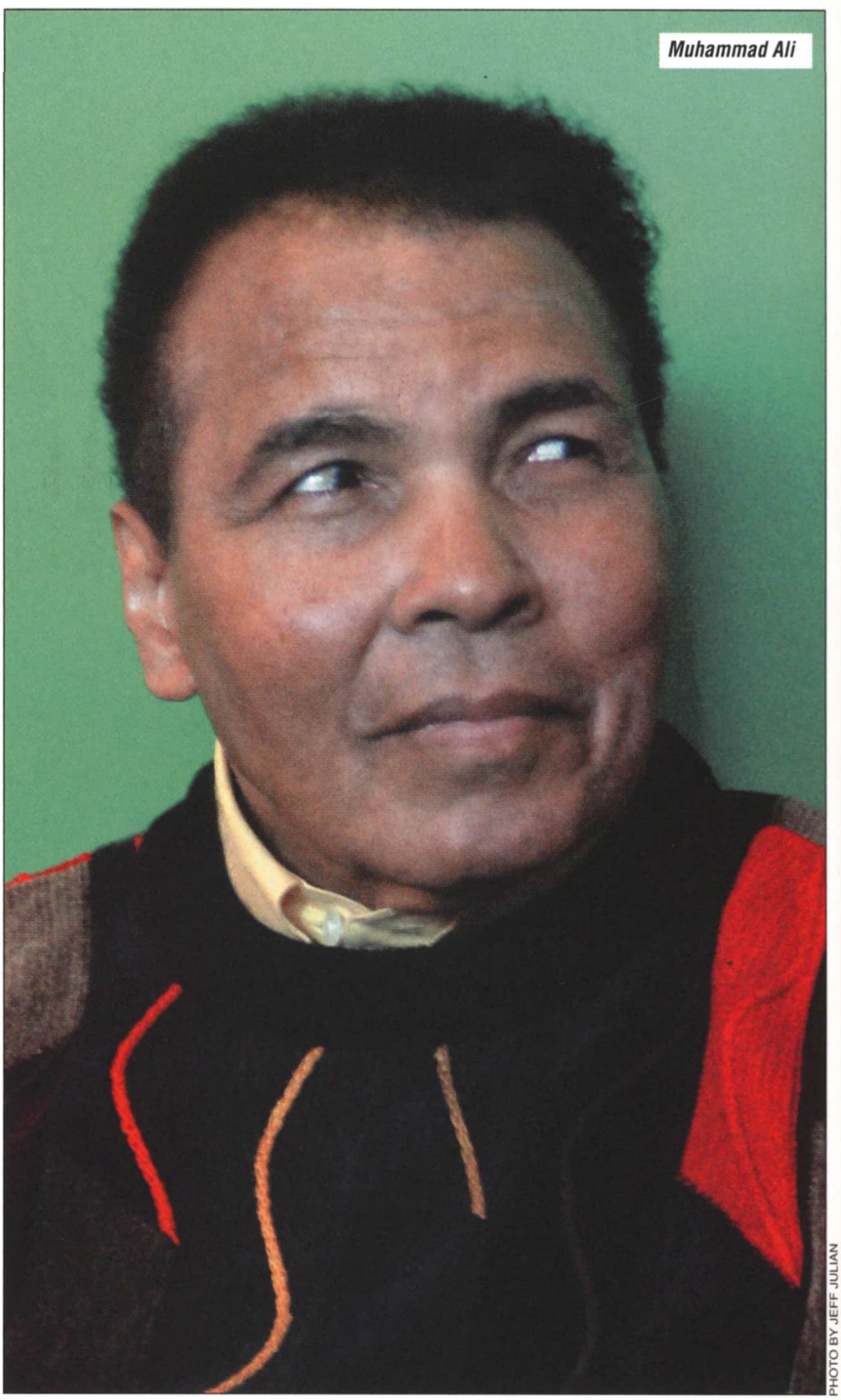
Kelly Pavlik
New York City,
December 11

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK

Sylvester Stallone, Joe Calzaghe
London, January

PHOTO BY DAVE M. BENNETT/GETTY IMAGES

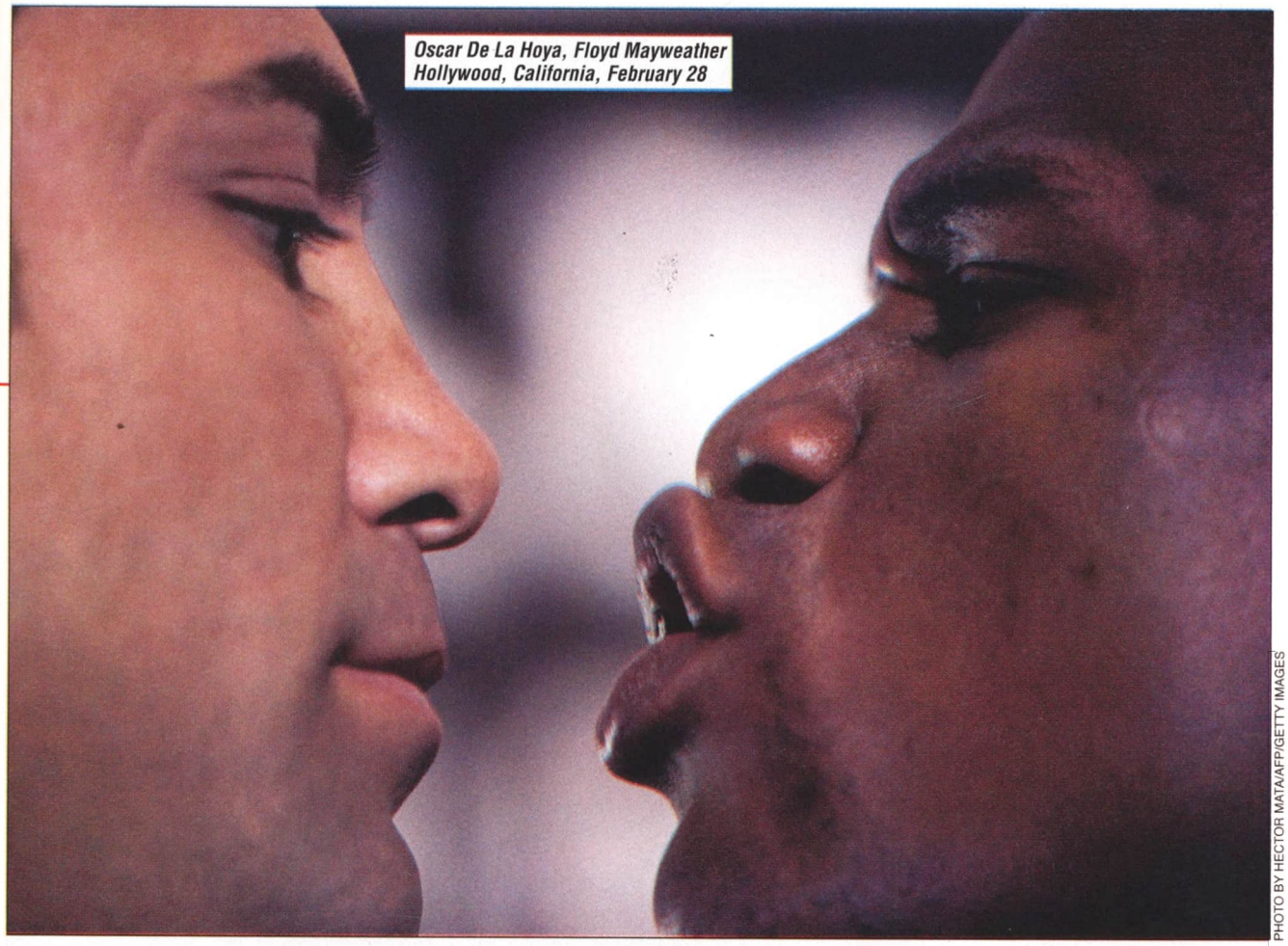
UP CLOSE & PERSONAL



Muhammad Ali

PHOTO BY JEFF JULIAN

Look into the eyes of Muhammad Ali and you can still see a glint of that old mischief behind the mask of illness. Check out the disappointment and resignation on the face of Winky Wright and the agony of Zab Judah as he writhes on the canvas. Have the contrasting personalities of Oscar De La Hoya and Floyd Mayweather ever been more obvious than in the photo of them going jowl-to-jowl during their preflight press tour? When it comes to the human face, the closer you get, the more you see—especially when you're staring into the face of a boxer.



Oscar De La Hoya, Floyd Mayweather
Hollywood, California, February 28

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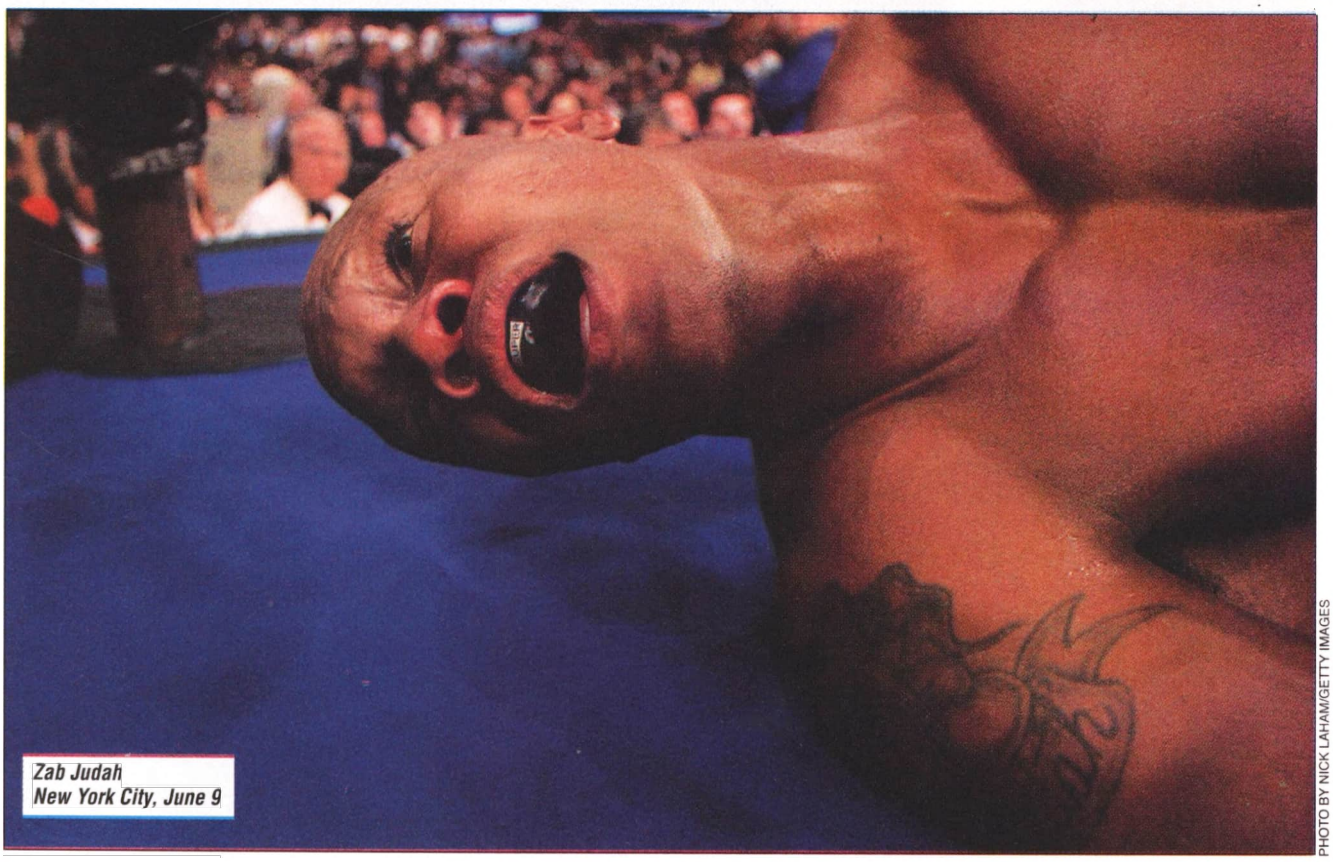

Zab Judah
New York City, June 9

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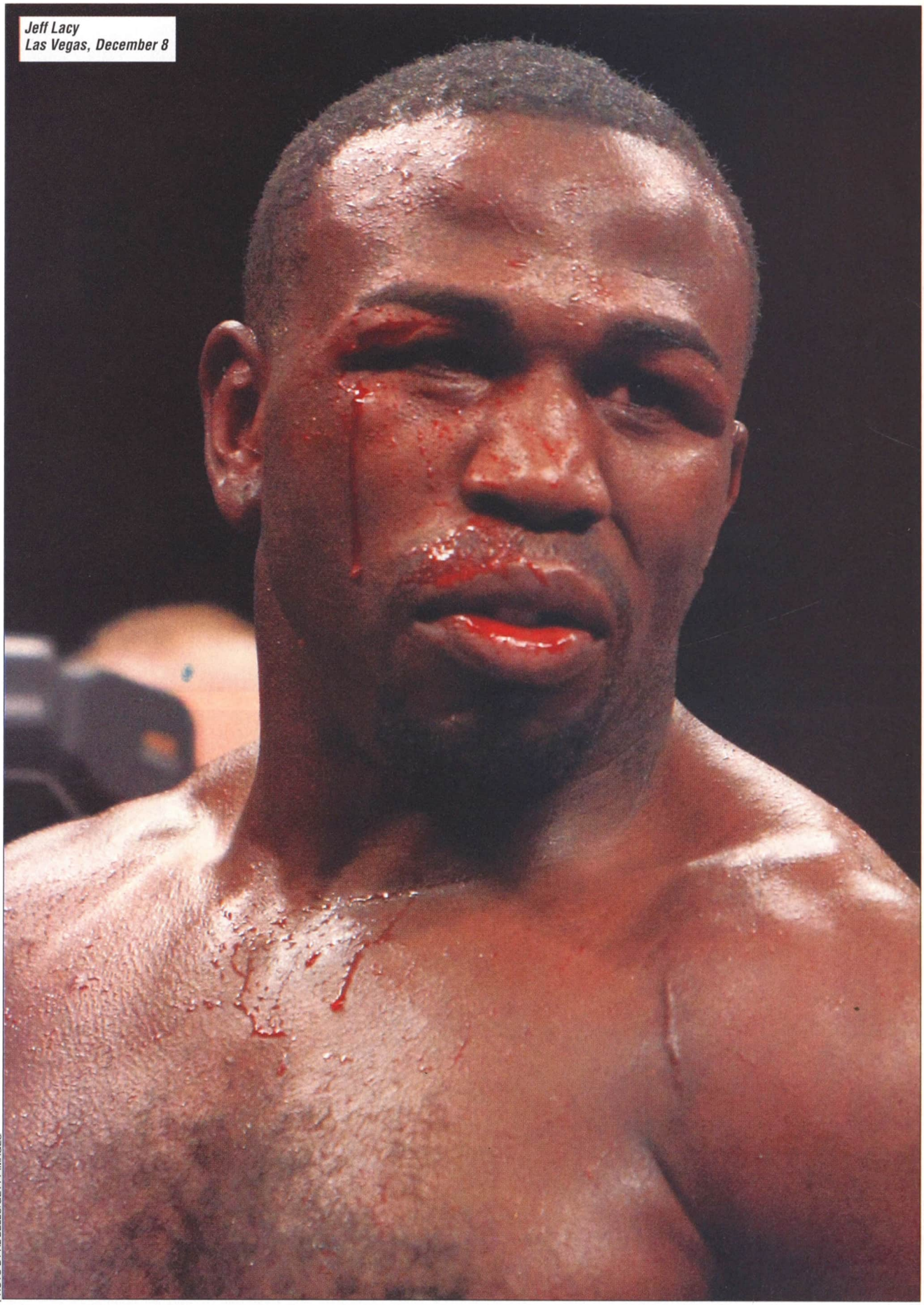

Jeff Lacy
Las Vegas, December 8

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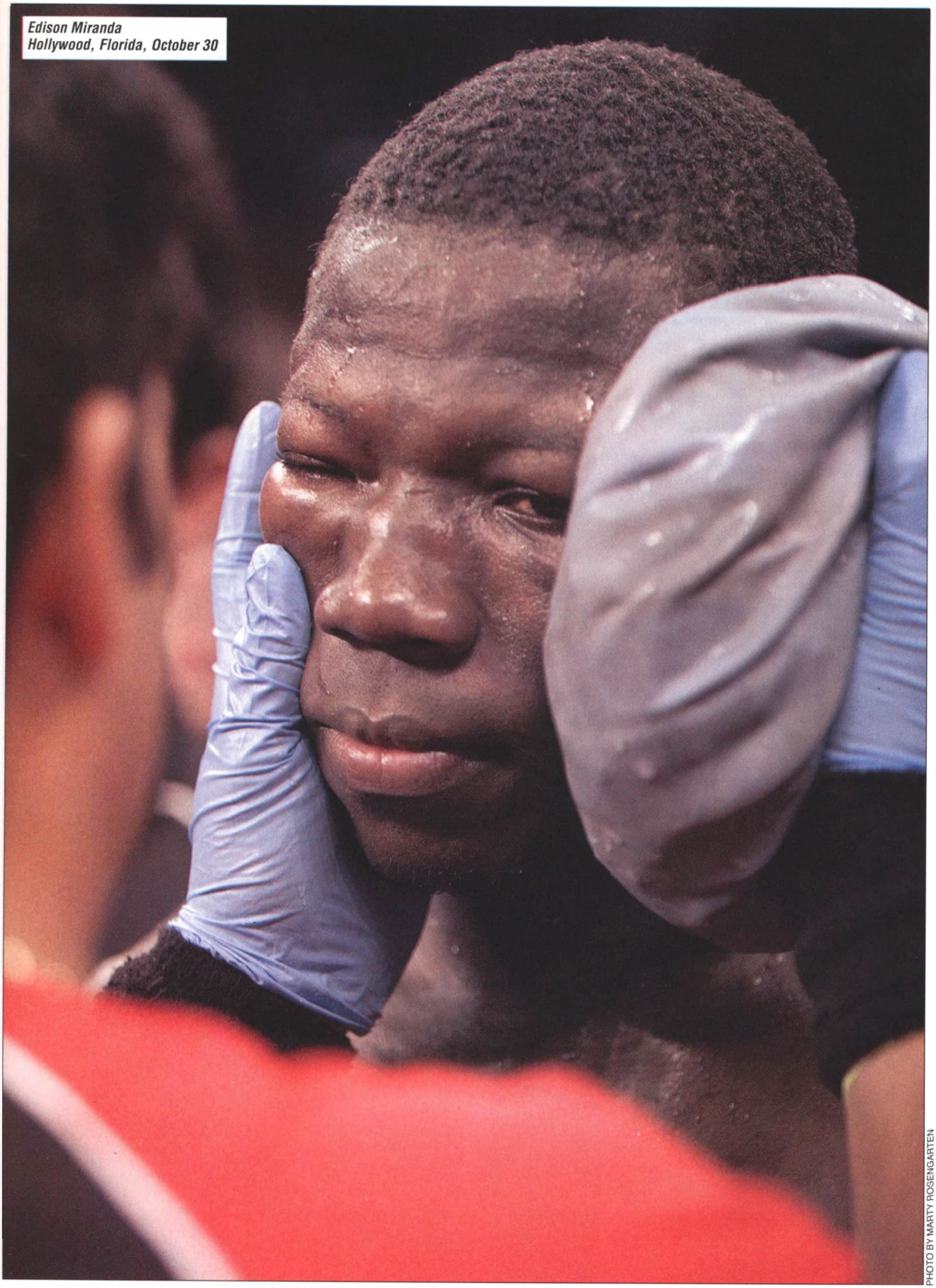

Edison Miranda
Hollywood, Florida, October 30

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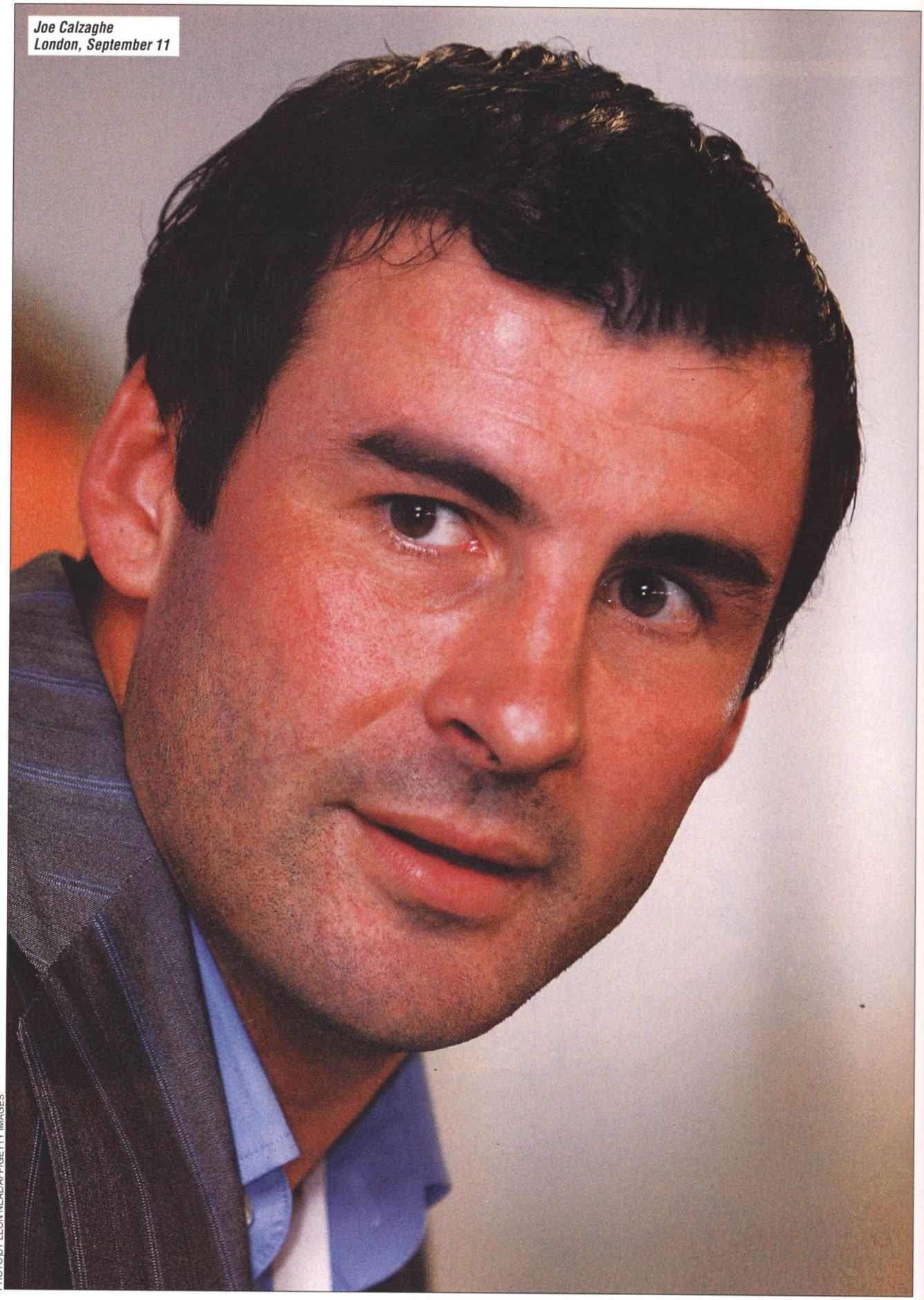

Joe Calzaghe
London, September 11

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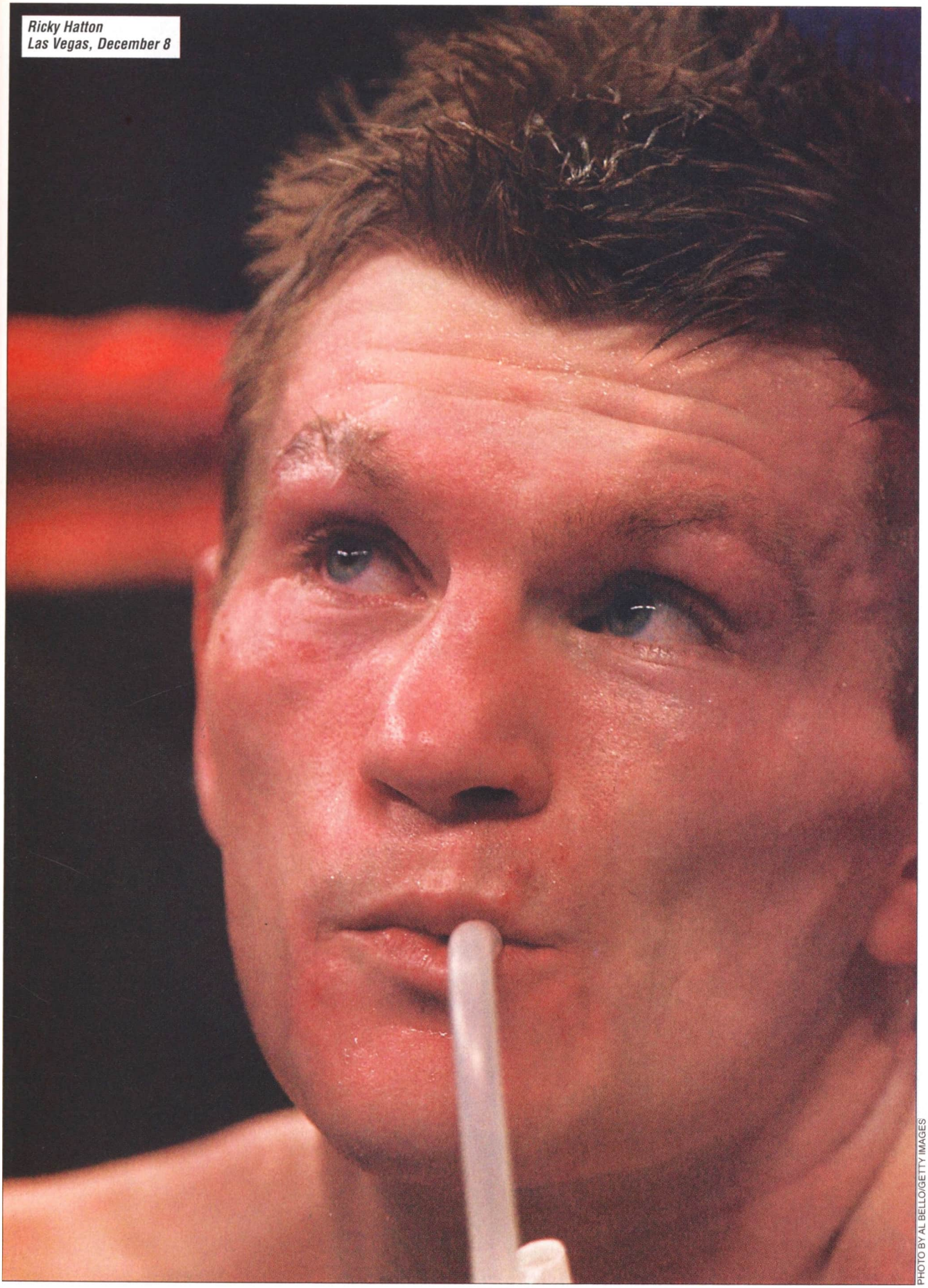

Ricky Hatton
Las Vegas, December 8

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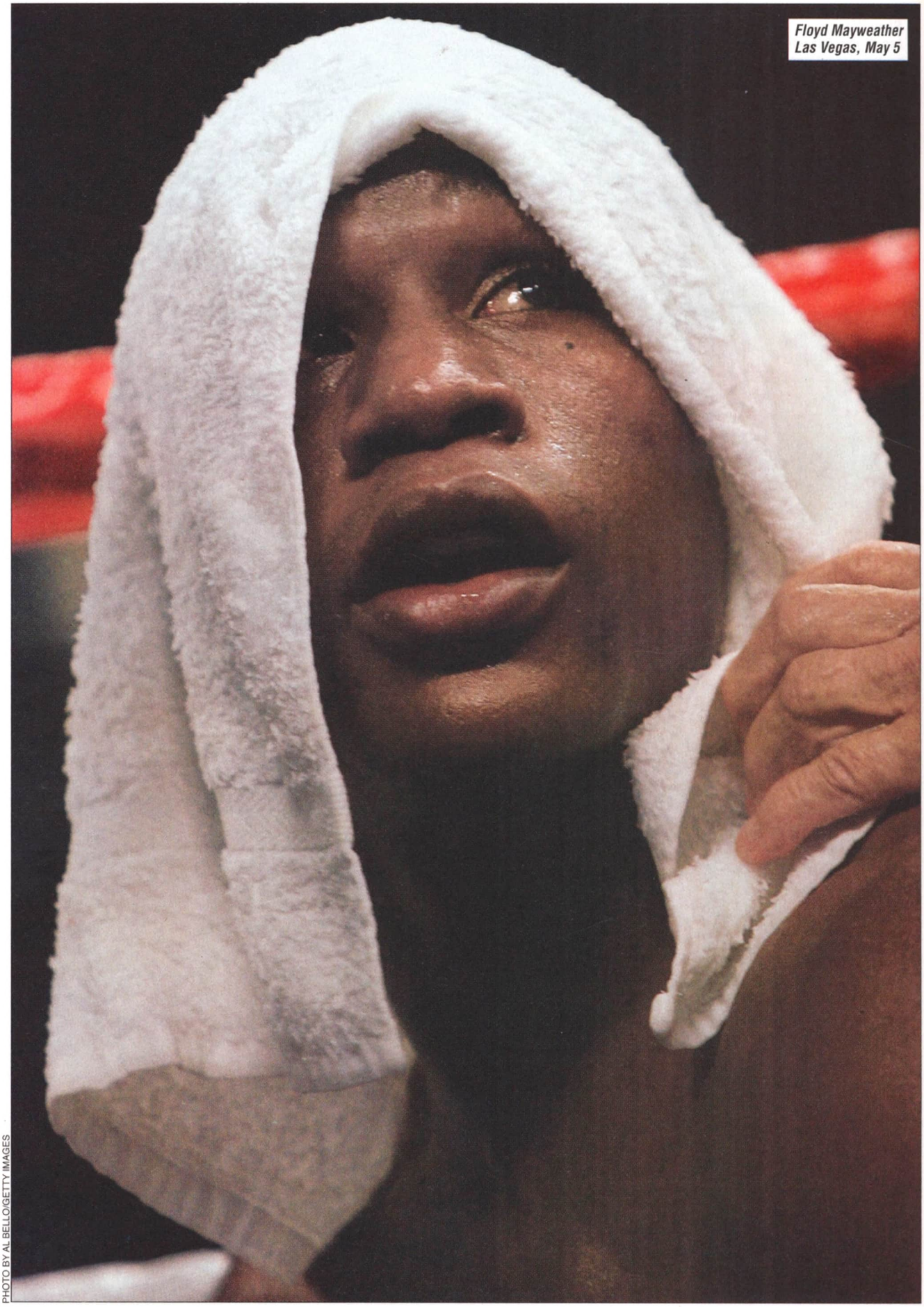
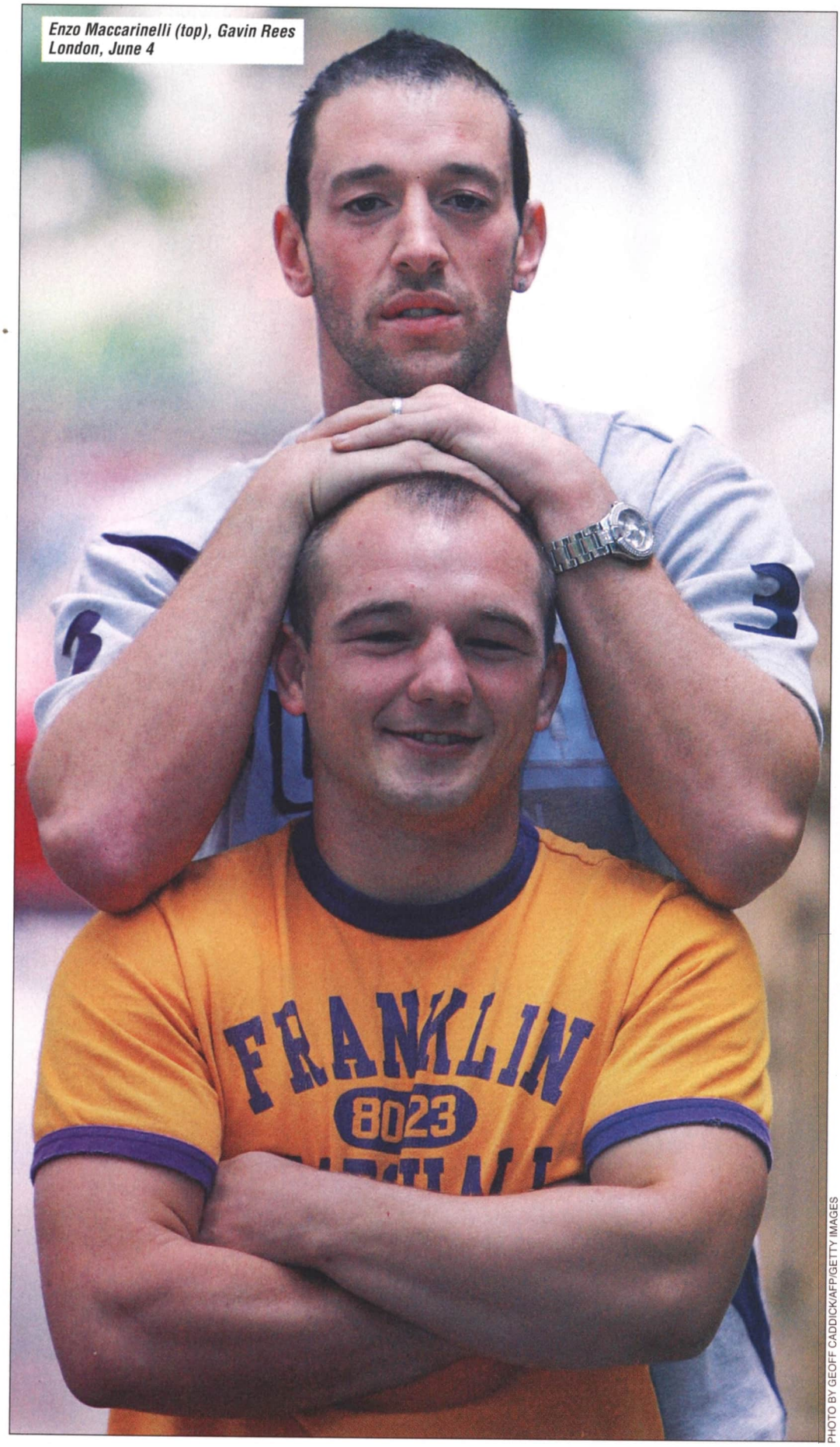


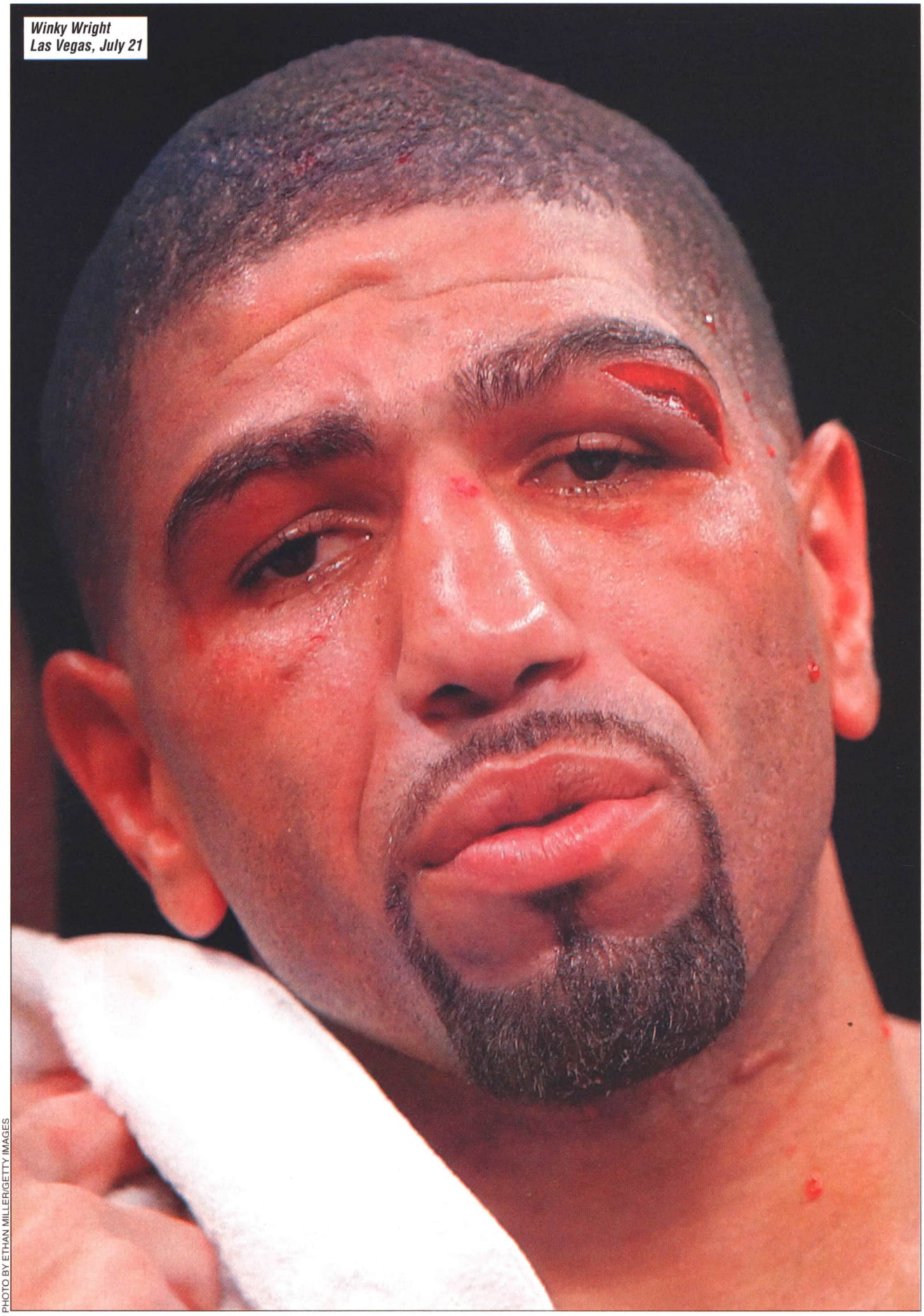
Floyd Mayweather
Las Vegas, May 5

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



Enzo Maccarinelli (top), Gavin Rees
London, June 4

PHOTO BY GEOFF CADDICK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



Winky Wright
Las Vegas, July 21

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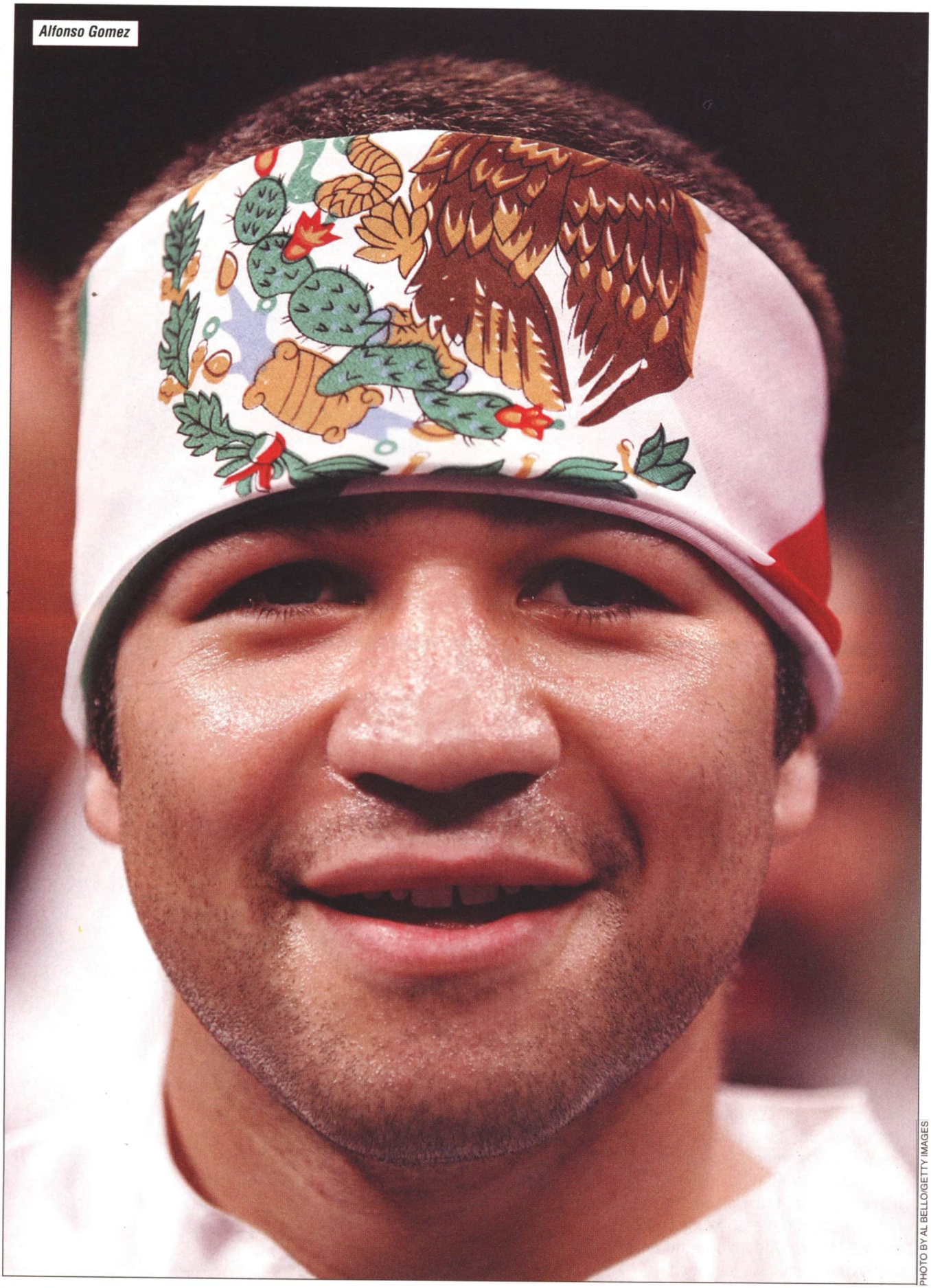


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

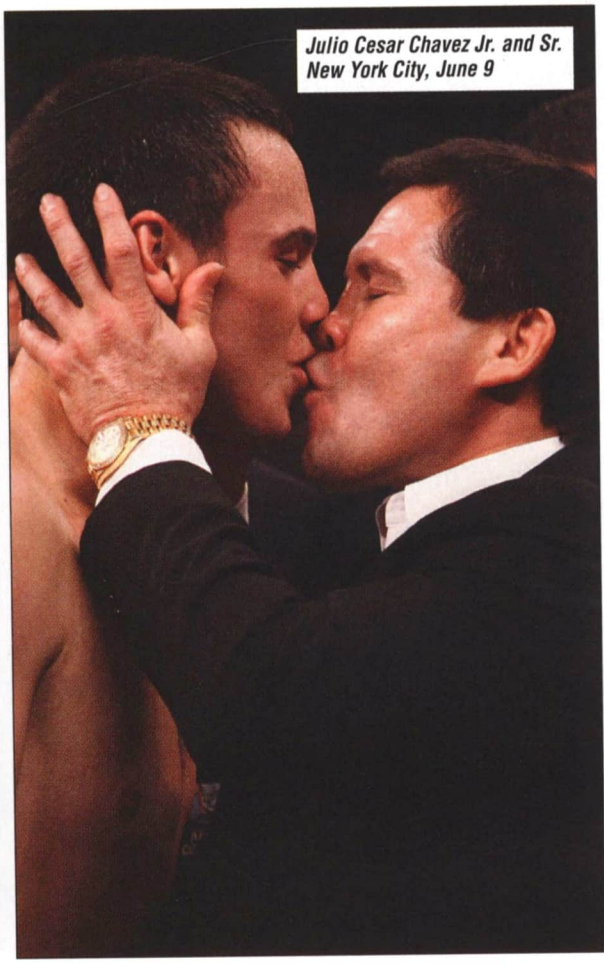
CAMERA CLICKS

Joe Calzaghe with BBC Sports Personality of the Year trophy Las Vegas, December 9

If you only watch what happens in the boxing ring, you're missing a large part of what boxing is all about. Sure, it's about punches, knockdowns, bloody noses, and split decisions. But it's also about weigh-ins, press conferences, corny publicity photos, and sometimes even death. It's all part of the rich and varied tableau that makes boxing unique among human endeavors and a big part of the reason we love it so.

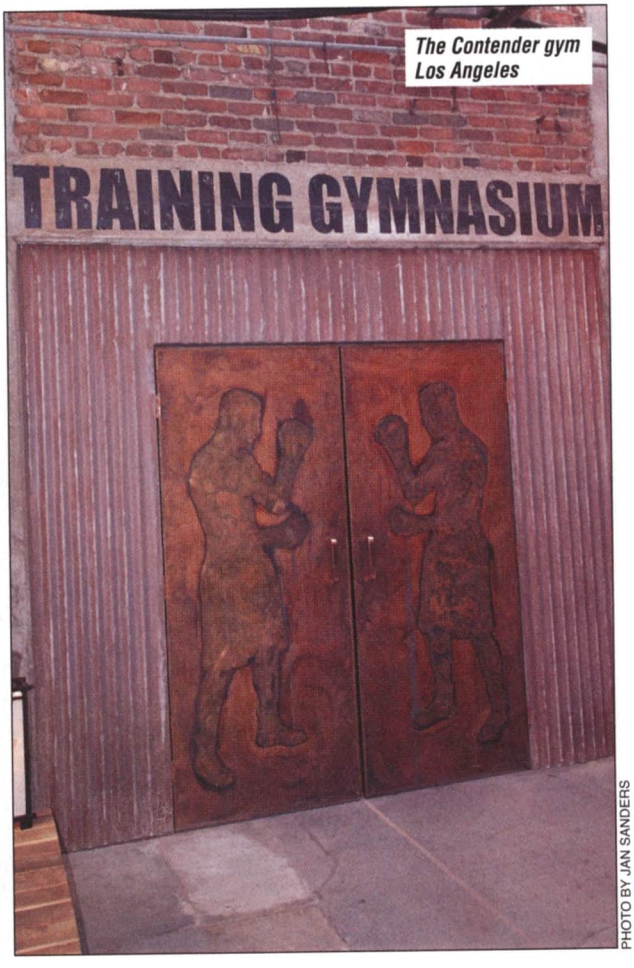
Bernard Hopkins, Winky Wright
Las Vegas, July 20

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES



Julio Cesar Chavez Jr. and Sr.
New York City, June 9

PHOTO BY NICK LAHAM/GETTY IMAGES



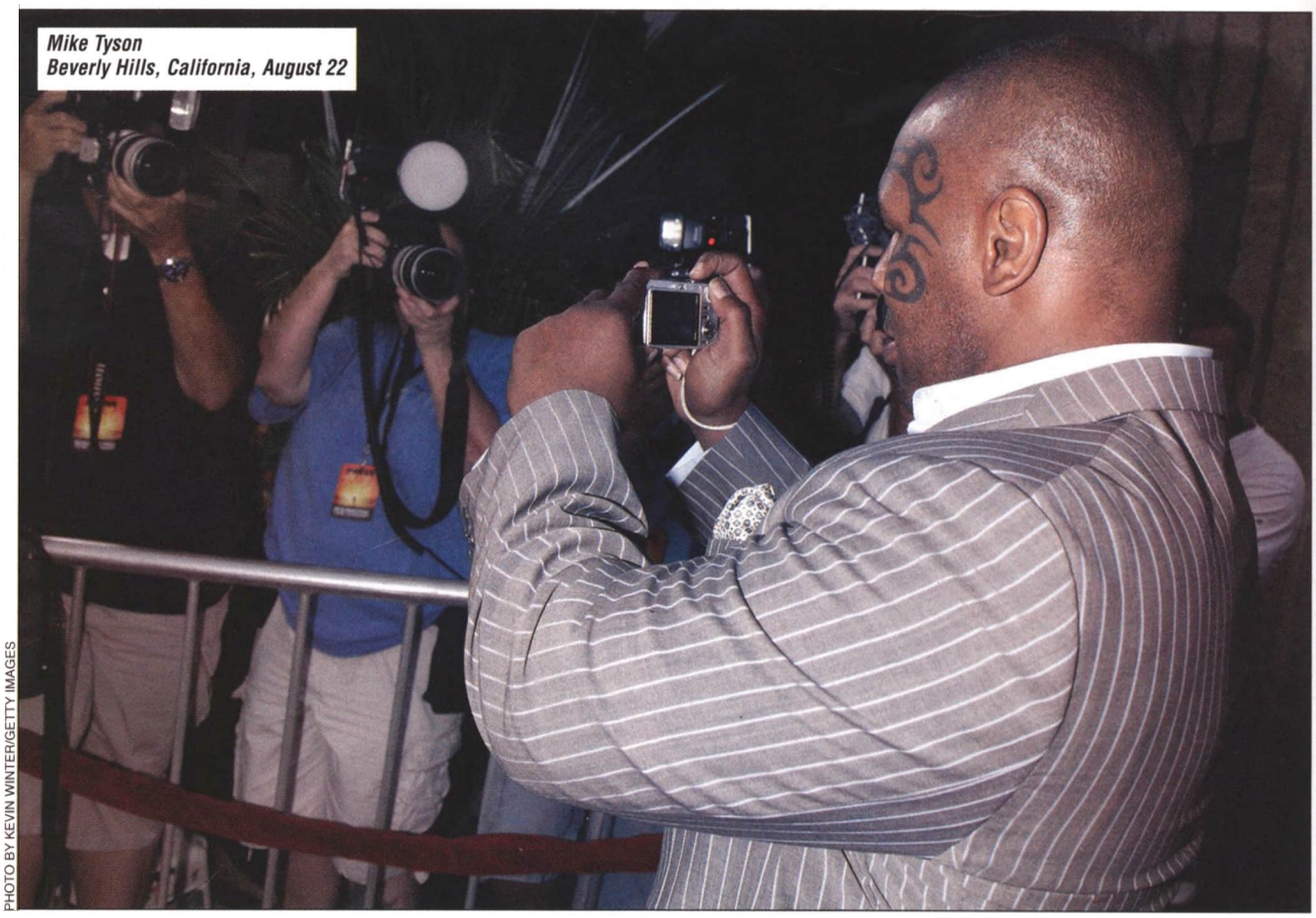
The Contender gym
Los Angeles

PHOTO BY JAN SANDERS

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GTTY IMAGES

Sultan Ibragimov, Shannon Briggs
New York City, April 18

PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/GETTY IMAGES

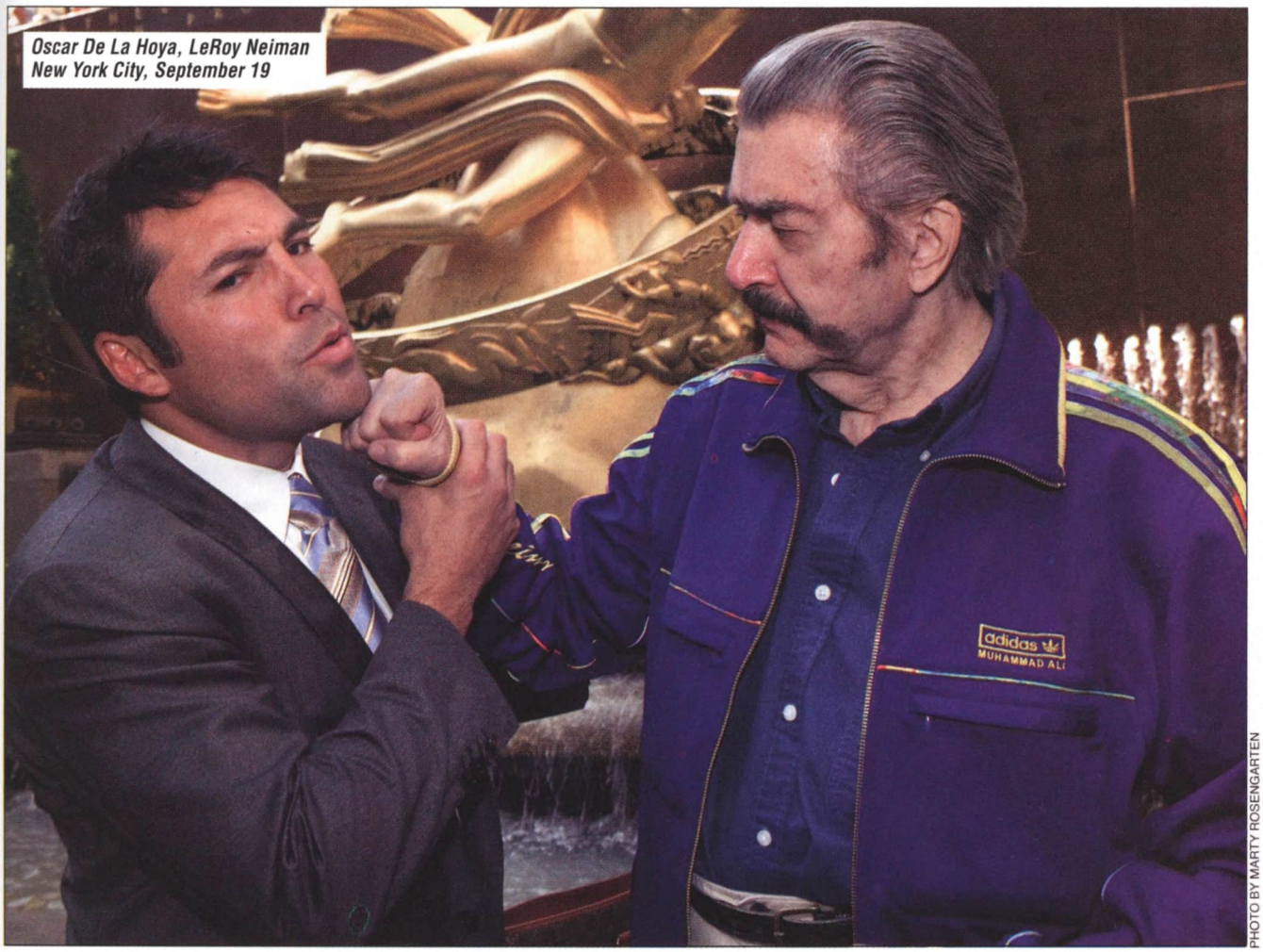


Mike Tyson
Beverly Hills, California, August 22

PHOTO BY KEVIN WINTER/GETTY IMAGES

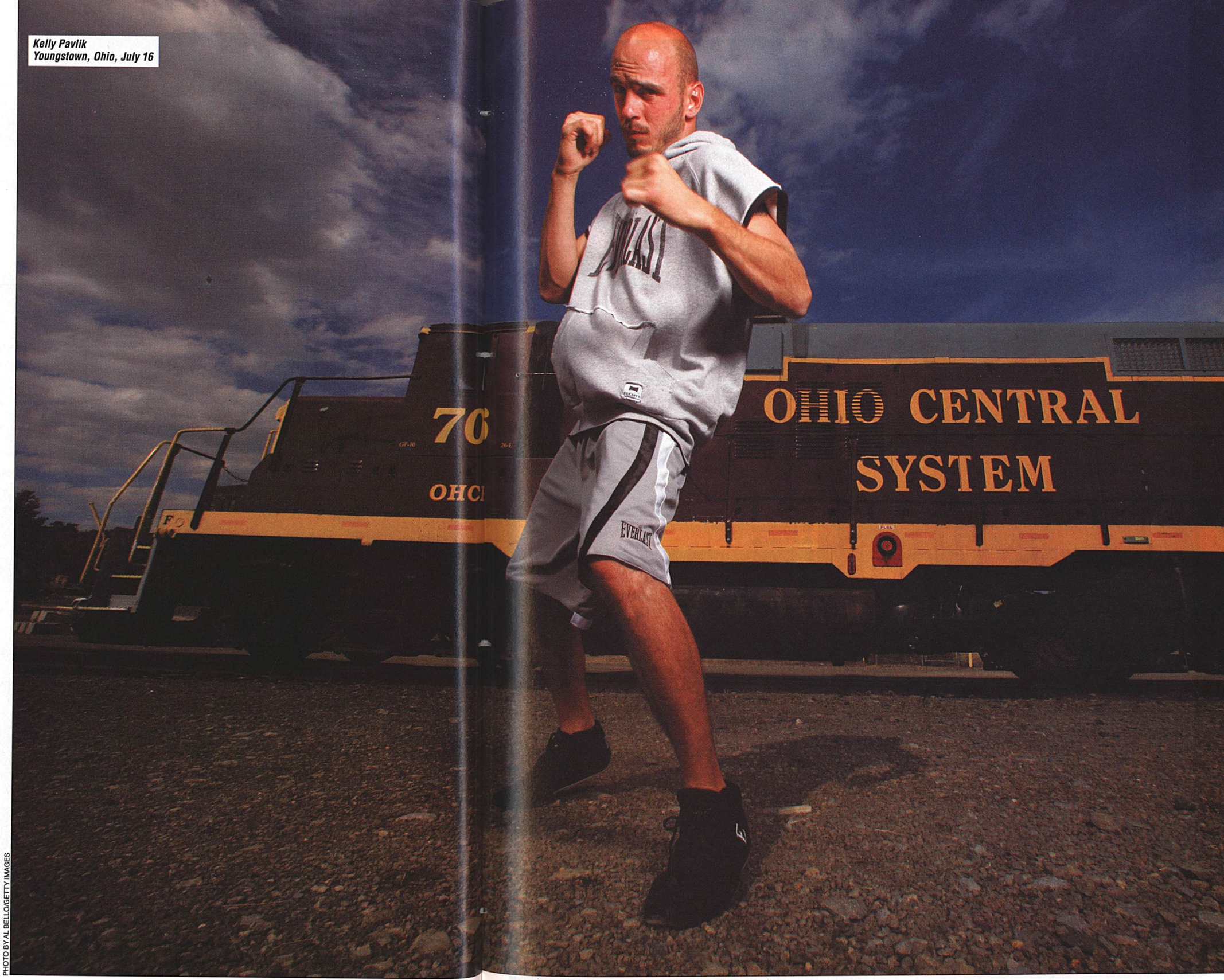
Roadside memorial to Diego Corrales
Las Vegas, May 8

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES



Oscar De La Hoya, LeRoy Neiman
New York City, September 19

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN



Kelly Pavlik
Youngstown, Ohio, July 16

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

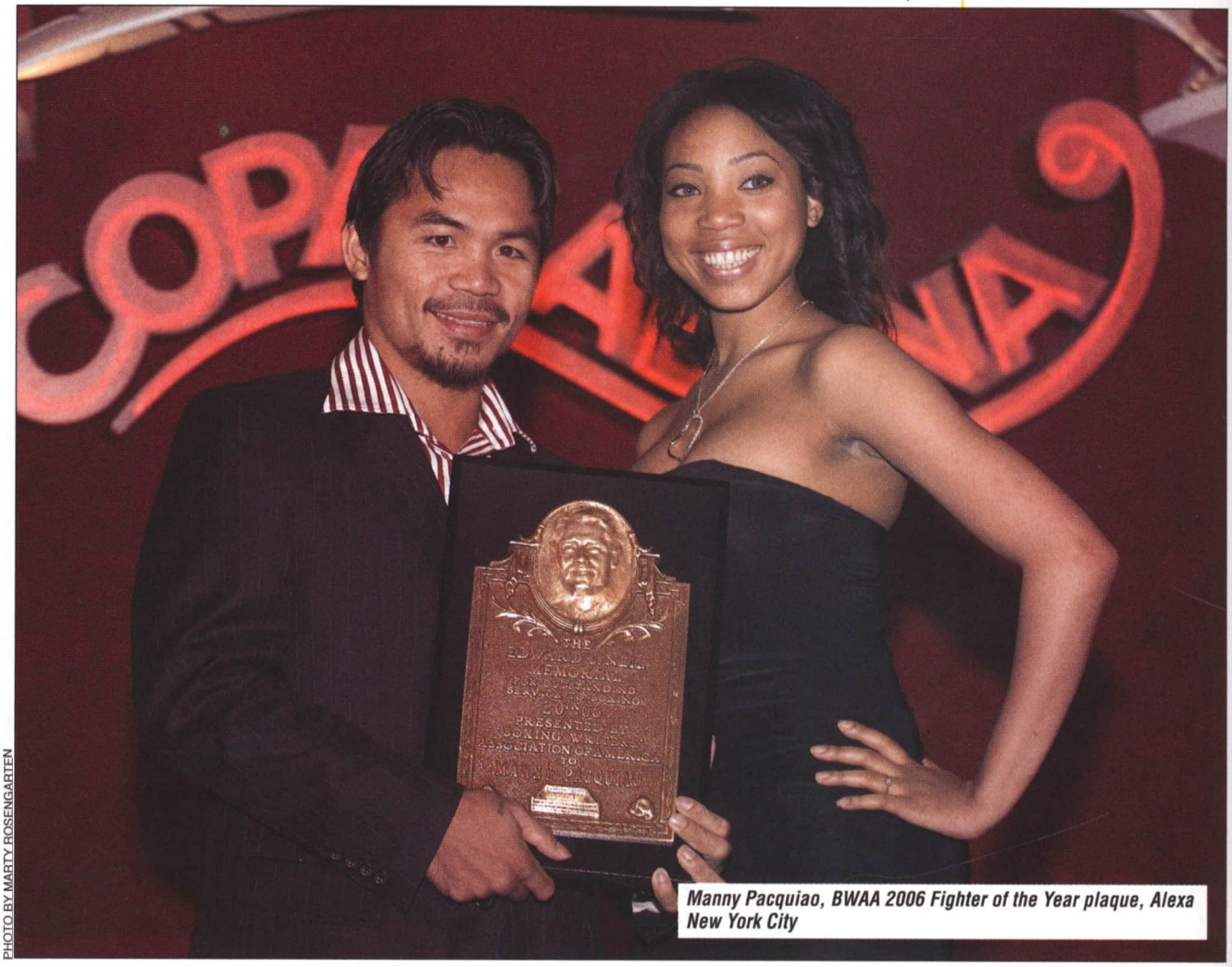


PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

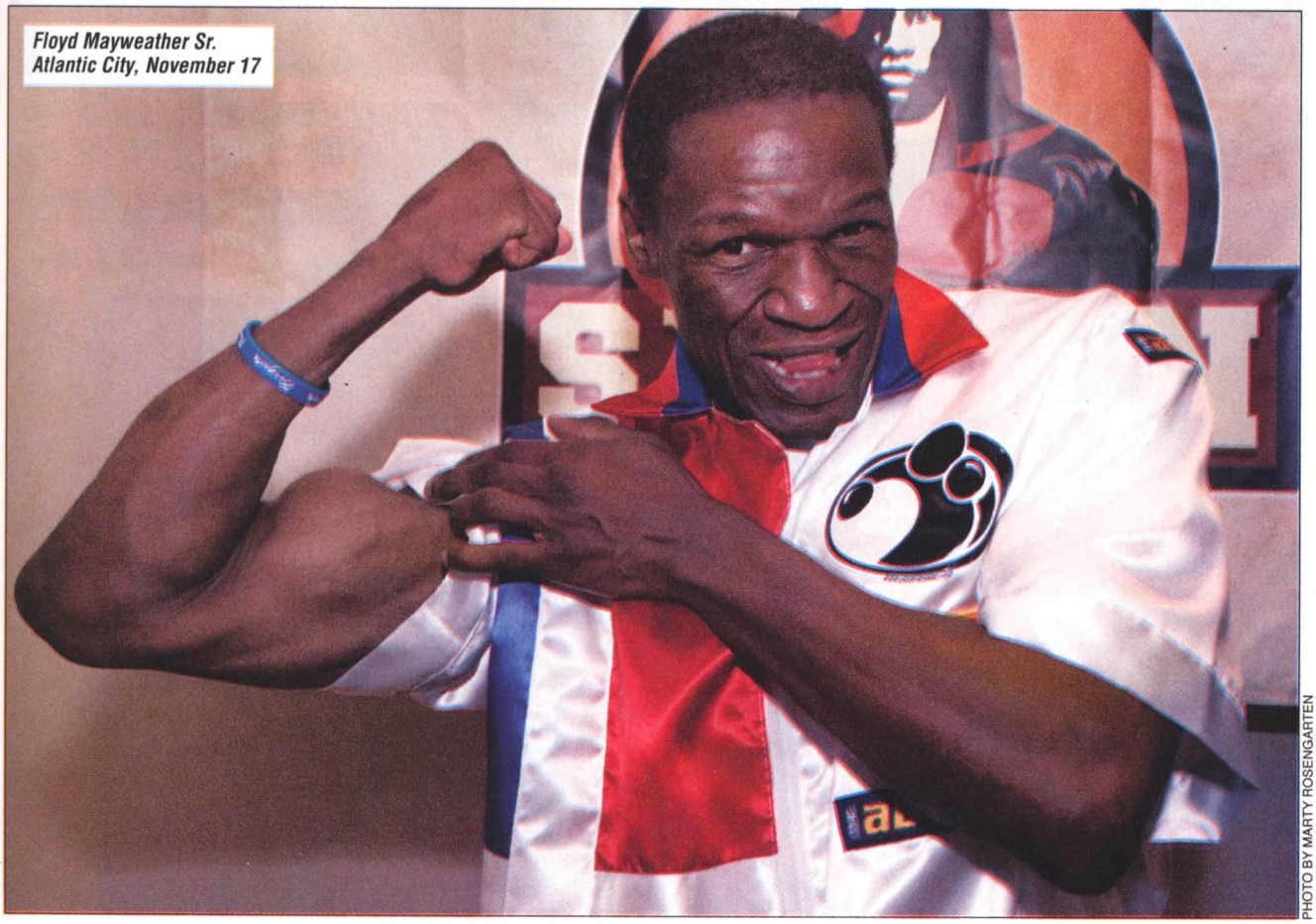
Manny Pacquiao, BWAA 2006 Fighter of the Year plaque, Alexa New York City

PHOTO BY LISA MAREE WILLIAMS/GETTY IMAGES

Anthony Mundine Sydney, Australia, December 20

Ricky Hatton
Las Vegas, January 18

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

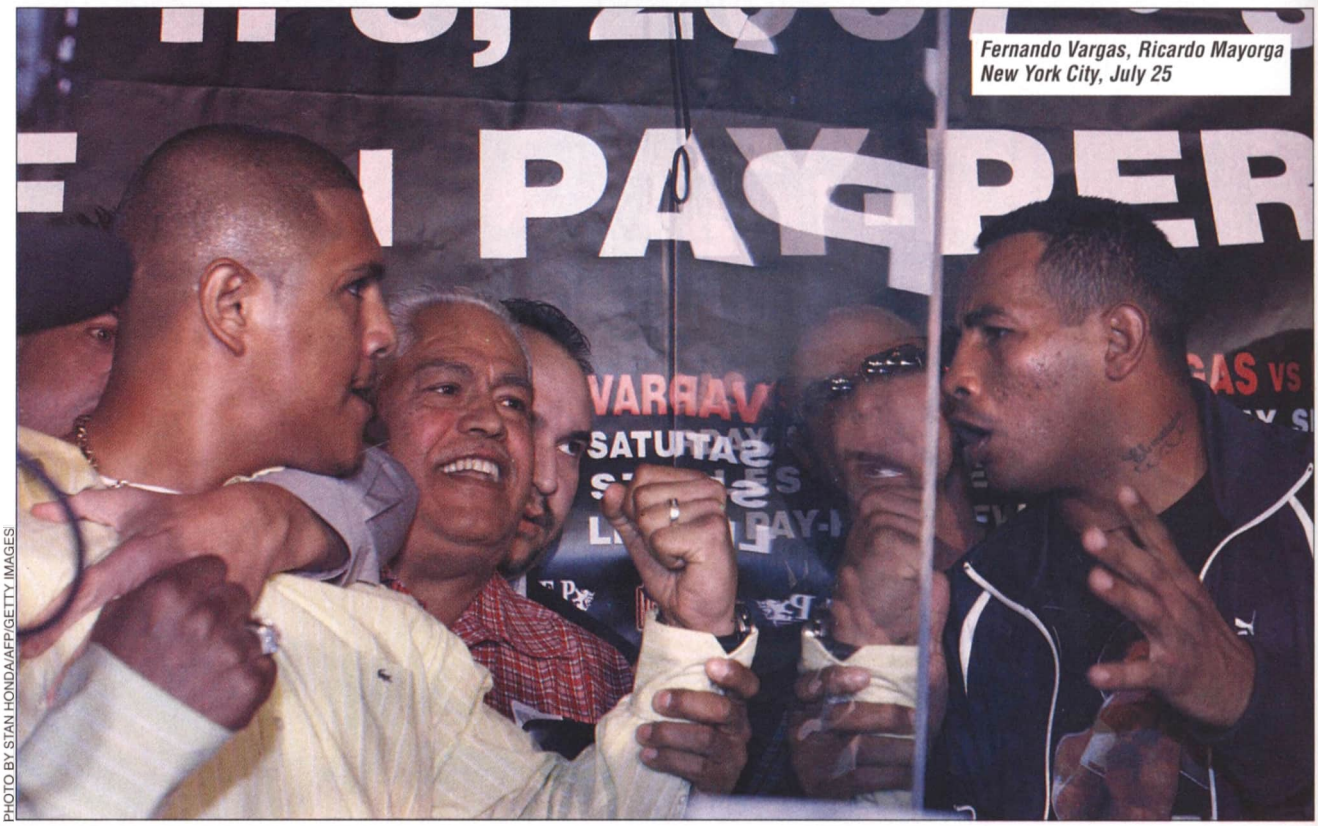


Floyd Mayweather Sr.
Atlantic City, November 17

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Carlos Delgado, Miguel Cotto, Carlos Beltran
New York City

PHOTO BY CHRIS FARINA/TOP RANK



Fernando Vargas, Ricardo Mayorga
New York City, July 25

PHOTO BY STAN HONDA/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

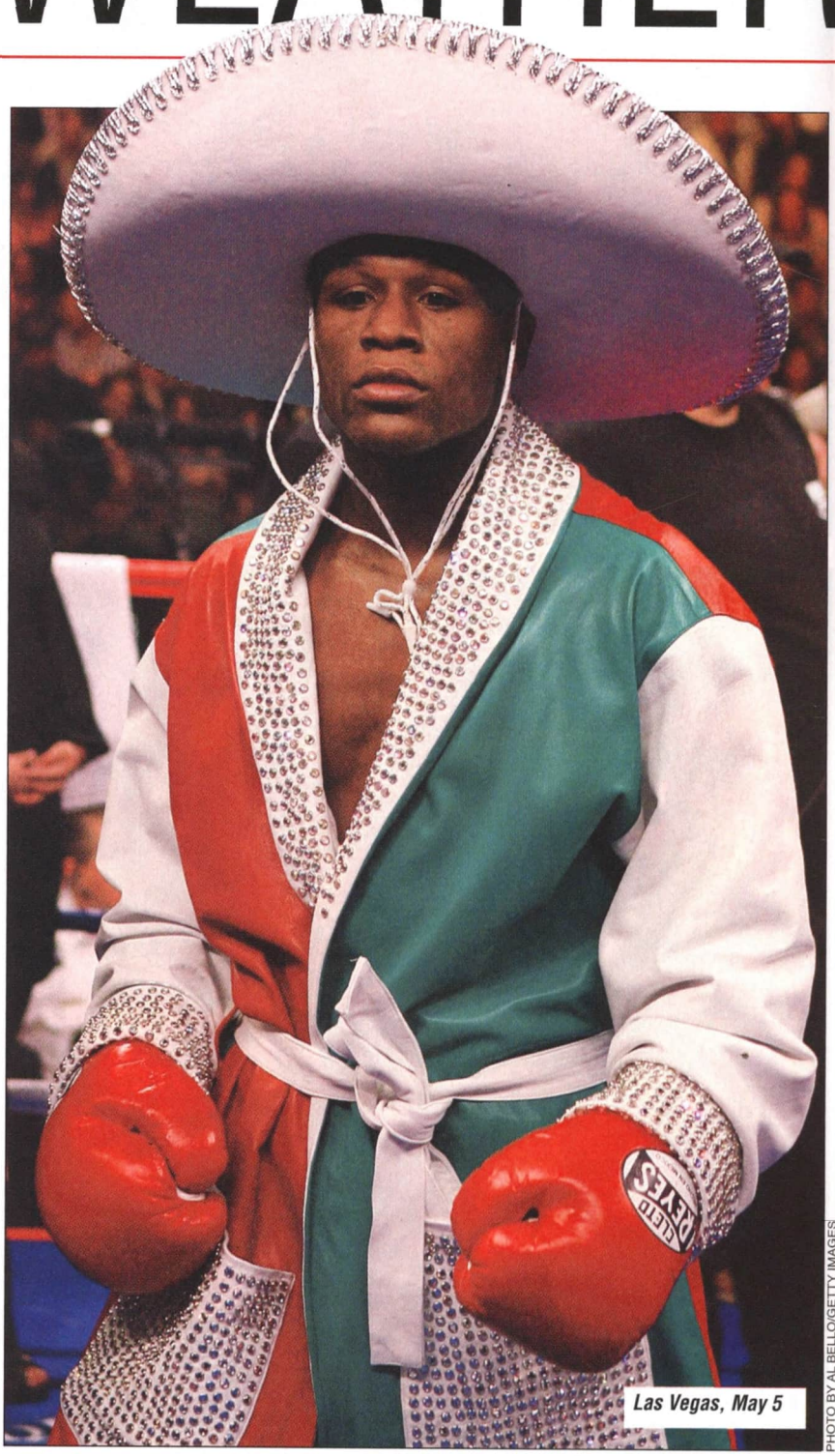
Vitali Klitschko
Lviv, Ukraine, February 9

PHOTO BY EVGEN KRAWS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Vitali and Wladimir Klitschko
Germany, October 6

PHOTO BY SASCHA BAUMANN/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

MONEY MAYWEATHER



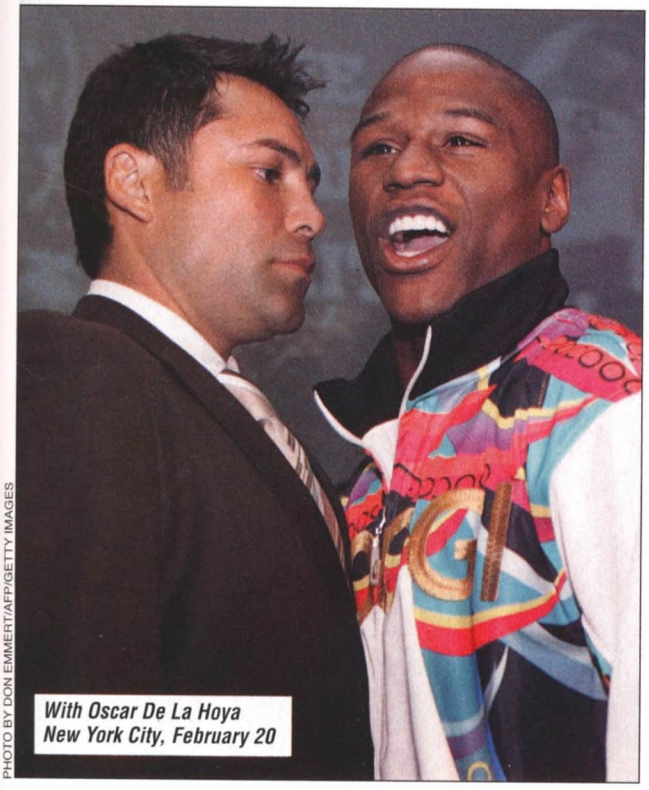
Las Vegas, May 5

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

The year 2007 will be remembered as the year Floyd Mayweather became one of boxing's rarest commodities—a crossover star. He's a brilliant boxer and a complicated man of many moods, someone who can shift from peerless fighting machine to loving father faster than he can unload a five-punch combination. He's considered himself as a superstar for more than a decade—and has never been shy about saying so. Now the rest of the world has come around to his way of thinking.

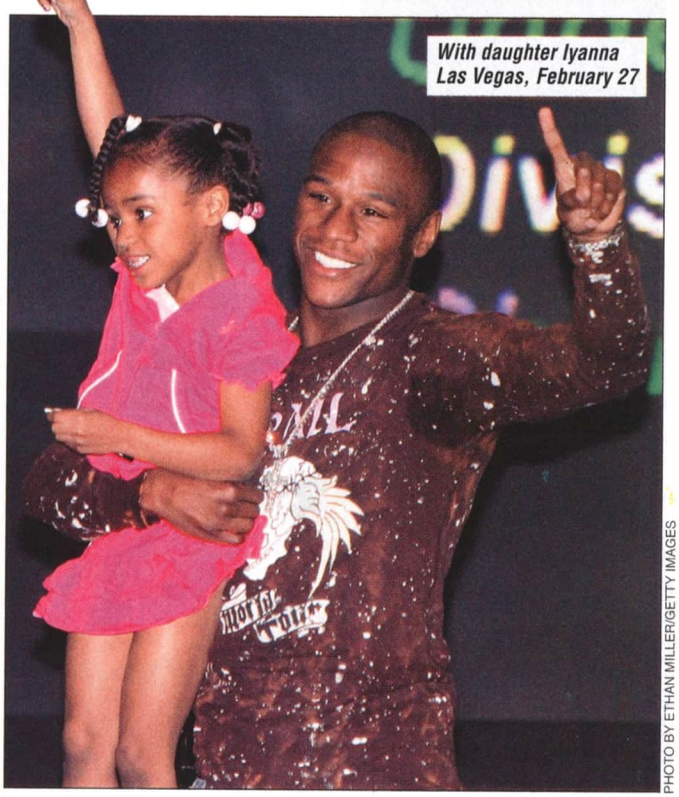
Knocking out Ricky Hatton
Las Vegas, December 8

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES



With Oscar De La Hoya
New York City, February 20

PHOTO BY DON EMMERT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



With daughter Iyanna
Las Vegas, February 27

PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

All dressed up for **Dancing With The Stars**

PHOTO BY CAROL KAELSON/ABC

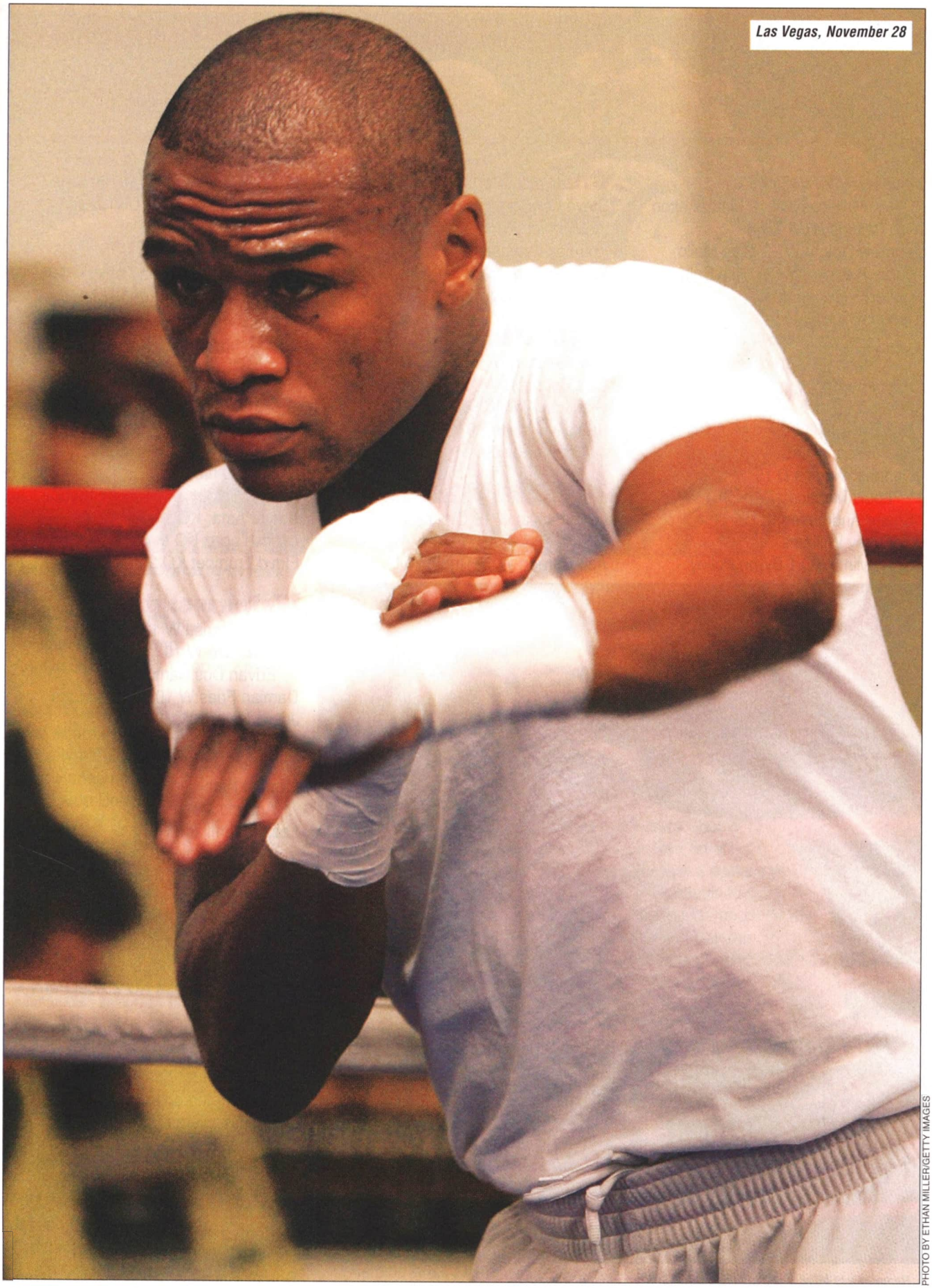


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Summary

Heavyweights

Ruslan Chagaev W 12 Matt Skelton (*Retains WBA Title*)
Andrew Golota W 12 Mike Mollo
Taras Bidenko W 12 Cisse Salif
Robert Hawkins W 10 Dominick Guinn
Chazz Witherspoon W 8 Kendrick Releford
Emmanuel Nwodo KO 2 Ezra Sellers
Gabe Brown D 8 Paul Marinaccio
Eric Fields TKO 1 Kelvin Davis
Donnell Wiggins D 10 Louis Monaco
Shane Andreesen KO 2 Corey Williams
Brian Minto KO 1 Byron Polley

Cruiserweights

Steve Cunningham KO 12 Marco Huck (*Retains IBF Title*)
Tomasz Adamek W 8 Josip Jalusic
Yoan Pablo Hernandez KO 1 Mohamed Azzaoui

Light Heavyweights

Roy Jones Jr. W 12 Felix Trinidad
Lars Buccholz W 12 Stan Johnson
Glen Johnson KO 8 Hugo Pineda
Pablo Nievas KO 8 Franco Sanchez

Super Middleweights

Jean Pascal W 10 Omar Pittman
Edison Miranda KO 3 David Banks
Allan Green W 10 Rubin Williams
Hector Velazco W 10 Martin Islas
Louis Sargeant KO 4 Darrell Woods

Middleweights

Sergio Mora KO 6 Rito Ruvalcaba
Kopjo Issah KO 2 Tawiah Okwaji

Junior Middleweights

Alex Bunema KO 10 Roman Karmazin
Rafael Sosa Pintos W 10 Fernando Battaglia
Ulises Lopez KO 2 Juan Alaggio
Jose Ramirez KO 7 Julian Romero
Anthony Small KO 7 Mehrdud Takaloo
Alberto Soto KO 5 Arnold Gamboa
Adnan Amar KO 3 Ian MacKillop
Ulises Lopez KO 2 Juan Alaggio
Floyd Trumpet KO 2 Ian Blue

Welterweights

Jackson Bonsu W 12 Brice Faradji
Luis Collazo W 10 Edvan Dos Santos Barros
Damian Frias W 10 Derrick Moon
Jesus Karass W 10 Germaine Sanders
Lovemore N'dou KO 7 Rafael Ortiz
Lamont Peterson W 10 Antonio Mesquita
Laszlo Komijathi W 10 Janos Petrovics
Damian Frias W 10 Derrick Moon
Daigoro Yamamoto D 10 Parinya Jockygym
Omar Weis W 6 Alberto Montenegro
Ed Paredes KO 5 Cesar Vega
James De La Rosa KO 2 Abel Perry

Junior Welterweights

Paul Malignaggi W 12 Herman Ngoudjo (*Retains IBF Title*)
Anthony Peterson KO 8 Jose Izquierdo
Devon Alexander W 12 DeMarcus Corley
Michel Rosales KO 2 Dairo Esalas
Norio Kimura KO 7 Kenryo Matsumoto
Randall Bailey KO 5 Anthony Mora
Derrick Samuels KO 3 Cory Peterson

PHOTO BY DON EMMERT/GETTY IMAGES

Heavyweight Mike Mollo gives Andrew Golota a chinful of head

PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Junior welterweight DeMarcus Corley rips a left into Devon Alexander

Martin Coggi KO 3
Juan Carlos Alamo
Angelo Santana KO 1 Kenny Keaton

Lightweights

Jose Alfaro W 12
Prawet Singwancha
Zahir Raheem KO 1
Ricardo Dominguez
Aldo Rios W 10 Diego Alzugaray
Vicente Escobedo W 10
Pascali Adorno
Kevin Mitchell KO 3 Edison Torres
Verquan Kimbrough W 12
Oisin Fagan
John Molina KO 2 Eddie Brooks

Junior Lightweights

Yusuke Kobori W 10
Hiroyasu Matsuzaki
Bogie Gonzalez KO 4 Thomas Soa
Yuriorkis Gamboa KO 1
Gilberto Luque
Roy Mukhlis KO 5 Fernando Otic
Satoshi Hosono KO 5 Keita Manabe

Featherweights

Joseph Omanz W 10 Pedro Malco
Ryoi Li Lee W 8
Atsushi Tsuburaya

Junior Featherweights

Steve Molitor W 12 Ricardo Castillo
(Retains IBF Title)
Poonsawat Kratingdaenggym W 11
Edgar Gabejan
Somsak Sithchatchawal W 8
Jack Asis
Arsen Martirosian W 12 Nikita Lukin
Esham Pickering KO 9 Sean Hughes
Ariel Degado KO 3
Rachamongkol Sor Pleonchit
Hafifi Ariat KO 1 Hasta La Ode

Bantamweights

Hozumi Hasegawa W 12
Simone Maludrottu
(Retains WBC Title)
Wladimir Sidorenko W 12
Nobuto Ikehara
(Retains WBA Title)
Brian Viloria W 8
Jose Garcia Bernal
Raul Martinez W 8 Alex Baba

Junior Bantamweights

Alexander Munoz W 12
Katsushige Kawashima
(Retains WBA Title)
Pramuansak Posuwan W 12
Eric Barcelona
Evans Mbamba W 12
Unathi Gqokoma
Suriya Klongpajol W 10
Noriyuki Komatsu
Jojo Bardon KO 1 Yuki Nasu

Flyweights

Yosam Choi W 12
Heri Amol
Shigetaka Ikehara W 10
Masayuki Kuroda
Richie Mepranum W 10
Allan Ranada
Fernando Lumacad W 10
Rey Migreno

Junior Flyweights

Roman Gonzalez W 10
Hirpshi Matsumoto
Katsunari Takayama KO 9
Ngaoprajan Sithsaithong

Strawweights

Kwanthai Chor Nor Pattalung W 12
Sofyan Efendi
Denver Cuello KO 5
Dennis Juntillano

Daniel Ponce De Leon W 12 Eduardo Escobedo

Las Vegas, Nevada: Depending on the style of his opponent, Ponce De Leon can be either wildly entertaining or excruciatingly dull. Unfortunately for HBO's Pay-Per-View customers and the early arriving fans on hand for the Floyd Mayweather-Ricky Hatton main event at the MGM Grand Garden Arena, Escobedo was the sort of quick-footed, well-schooled technician who generally gives the murderous-punching Ponce De Leon fits. The outcome was a tedious, 12-round affair in which Ponce De Leon struggled to a unanimous decision that was much closer than two of the three officials scorecards would have you believe.

The 27-year-old Ponce De Leon, 121, Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, rumbled forward from the start, eager to connect with one of his haymakers. But Escobedo, 122, Mexico City, kept his hands high, his legs moving, and refused to give his foe a stationary target.

It was pretty much the same story again in the second, third, and fourth rounds. Although Ponce De Leon failed to deliver anything of significance, he was certainly outworking Escobedo, who was too busy protecting himself to throw many punches. That changed in the fifth, when Escobedo, 23, landed a series of sharp counters that snapped his rival's head back and woke up the crowd.

Escobedo, 20-2 (14), had another good round in the sixth, when he stood his ground and connected with both hands. The punches did little to discourage Ponce De Leon, 34-1 (30), but Escobedo's momentum carried over into the next couple of rounds.

Escobedo, emboldened by his success, took the fight to his rival in the ninth, but it gave Ponce De Leon an opportunity to lash back and win his first round on THE RING scorecard since the fourth.

Although his face was bruised and he was nicked over the right eye, Ponce De Leon kept marching forward down the stretch, working hard but not really accomplishing much. For his part, Escobedo stayed calm and steadfastly refused to be drawn into a punch-up.

Many of the rounds were as close as they were uneventful, so it was hard to argue with Adelaide Byrd's 115-113 tally for Ponce De Leon, but Duane Ford (117-111) and Robert Hoyle (118-110) were way too generous to the southpaw slugger. THE RING had Ponce De Leon squeaking home by a 116-115 margin, but wouldn't argue with a close call going the other way. The referee was Nevada's Kenny Bayless.

"I tried to knock him out," said Ponce De Leon, "but he has great boxing skills."

Promoters: **Golden Boy Promotions, Mayweather Promotions**

(12-8-07)

Nigel Collins

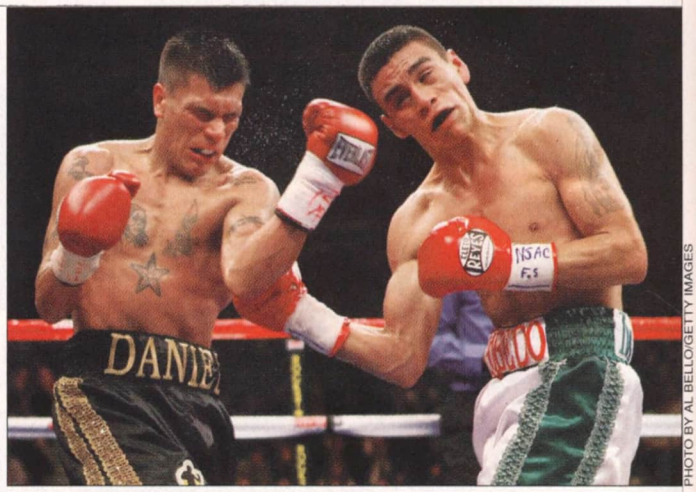


PHOTO BY AL BELLO/GETTY IMAGES

Ponce De Leon connects with a left uppercut

Jeff Lacy W 10 Peter Manfredo

Las Vegas, Nevada: In a battle of Joe Calzaghe victims, Lacy emerged the winner via unanimous decision over Manfredo, but looked decidedly jaded making his first start since December 2006, when he blew out his shoulder winning a decision over Vitali Tsypko. The bout was part of the lackluster Mayweather-Hatton undercard and did little to persuade anybody that either man is a threat to the reigning super middleweight champion.

Manfredo, 169, Providence, Rhode Island, got off to a promising start the first three rounds, moving well at range, sticking the jab in Lacy's face, and also connecting with an occasional right. But an overhand right from Lacy floored Manfredo in the fourth, and although Manfredo beat American referee Robert Byrd's count and was punching back at the bell, Lacy slowly fought his way back into the fight over the next few rounds. He applied steady pressure and landed enough punches to win three of the next four rounds on THE RING scorecard.

Lacy, 169, St. Petersburg, Florida, landed several solid rights in the seventh, and it looked like Manfredo, 27, might fold in the eighth. But he sucked it up and actually seemed the fresher fighter the final two rounds. Lacy, on the other hand, looked a decade older than his 30 years as he mauled and clinched his way to the final bell.

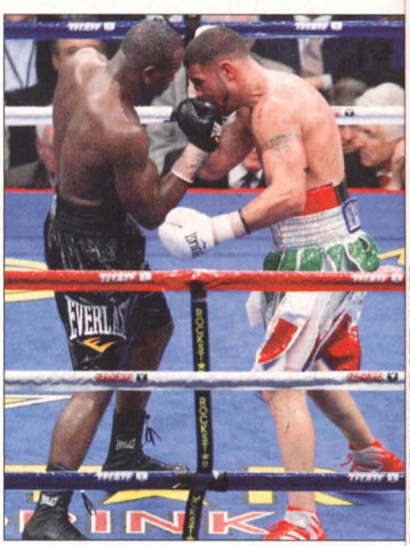


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Lacy catches Manfredo with his hands down

Judge Chuck Giampa's score of 95-94 was about right (THE RING had it even at 95-95), and C.J. Ross' 96-93 was within the bounds of reason, but the 97-92 tally handed in by Jerry Roth was way off the mark.

Considering that Lacy, 32-1 (17), was coming off a serious injury and a lengthy layoff, he deserves the benefit of the doubt. But it is also possible that he will never really recover from the protracted beating he took from Calzaghe. Although he lost, Manfredo, 28-5 (13), actually looked better losing to Lacy than he had in his two post-Calzaghe wins.

Television: **HBO Pay-Per-View**
Promoter: **Golden Boy Promotions, Mayweather Promotions**
(12-8-08)
Nigel Collins

Edwin Valero KO 3 Zaid Zavaleta

Cancun, Mexico: Not since the days of a young Pipino Cuevas has there been a fighter who has waged mass destruction on the opposition as Valero has. The latest to feel Valero's wrath was Mexican Zavaleta, who was halted at 1:18 of the third round of Valero's third defense of the WBA super featherweight title.

Statistically speaking at least, Zavaleta can say that he gave the Tokyo-based Venezuelan one of his hardest outings, even if it was not hard by any reasonable measure. Valero has now won all 23 of his fights by knockout, including 19 in the first round, so lasting more than seven minutes, as Zavaleta did, is a decent accomplishment.

Zavaleta, 129¾, tried to make a fight of it, with national honor at stake boxing in front of his countrymen, but he could never get on track. Valero, 129¾, made sure that the crowd at the Plaza de Toros would not have much to cheer about. Early in the first, the southpaw hurt Zavaleta with a right hook, and then later in the round he floored him with a straight left.

Valero is obviously a big puncher, but it was the quantity of blows as much as his power that did in the 28-year-old Zavaleta. Valero kept the blows coming from all angles in the second. It did not look like Zavaleta could hold Valero off much longer—and he didn't.

Zavaleta, 15-3-3 (11), was trapped on the ropes in the third and tagged with a right uppercut. His eyes were

[THE RING Fighter of the Month]

Steve Cunningham

Cruiserweights don't get much respect. Cruiserweights who are constantly fighting overseas, with no American television coverage, *really* don't get much respect.

But despite fighting his entire career at cruiserweight, without any of his significant fights on U.S. TV, Steve Cunningham can be denied his respect no longer. HBO and Showtime may not have shown much interest over the years in the 200-pound division, but they should definitely take an interest in Cunningham, a Philly fighter proving himself on the world level by traveling across the Atlantic Ocean to his opponents' homelands and winning.

His latest, and probably greatest, triumph came against previously unbeaten Marco Huck in Germany. Many were predicting that Cunningham's alphabet title reign would end in this first defense, but he dug down, rallied from an early deficit, and scored a tremendous 12th-round knockout.

If the David Haye-Enzo Maccarinelli winner sticks around the cruiserweight division, there can be no denying that Cunningham deserves the next crack at the legitimate world title. And if it happens, please, let's put it on American television. Cunningham deserves the exposure. And he deserves the respect that comes with it.

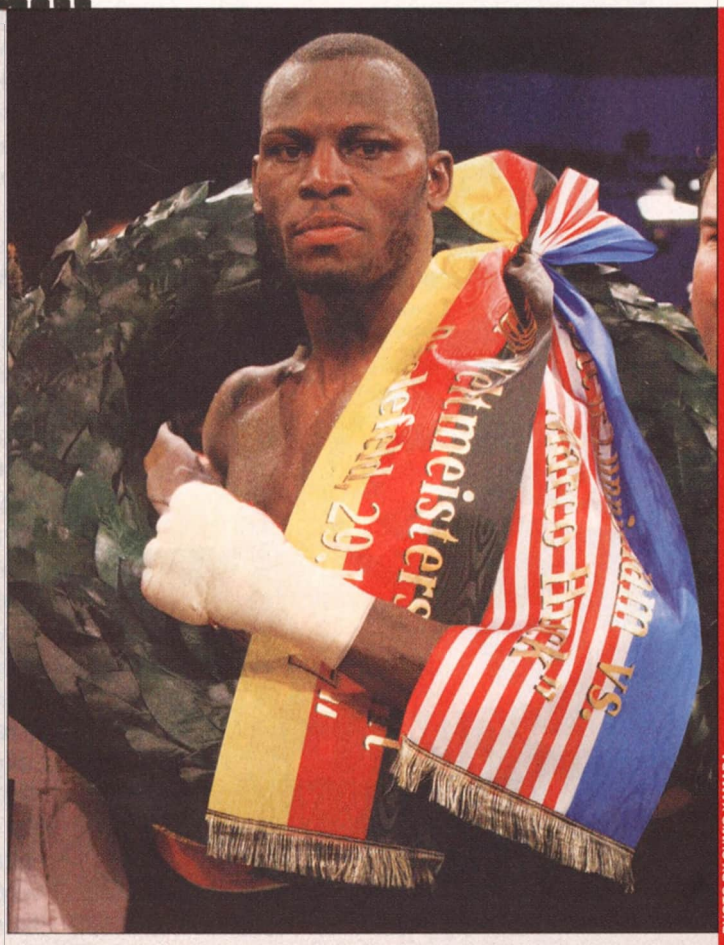


PHOTO BY SUMIO YAMADA

glazed and legs shaky, and referee Luis Pabon (Puerto Rico) made a timely intervention.

After the fight, Valero, 26, threw out a challenge to Manny Pacquiao. "Pac-Man," of course, has other business on his mind: a date with Juan Manuel Marquez in Las Vegas on March 15. But after that, expect Valero's name to resurface.

However, don't expect to see Valero's name on a billboard under the glittering lights of Las Vegas or outside New York's Madison Square Garden in the foreseeable future. A few years ago Valero failed an MRI due to head trauma sustained in a motorcycle accident and has been under medical suspension in the United States ever since.

If Valero keeps fighting with the same rate of success, public pressure may force the medical community to reevaluate his status. For now, though, it could at least be argued that Valero is less at risk than the man in the opposite corner.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Promociones Jose "Pepe" Gomez, Teiken Promotions, DiBella Entertainment, All Star Boxing**
(12-15-07)
Jack Hirsch

Jorge Linares KO 8 Gamaliel Diaz

Cancun, Mexico: Prior to his fight with WBC featherweight beltholder Linares, Diaz said that he would rather die than lose. Only one of those happened, and Diaz (to everyone's relief) gets to fight another day.

Linares retains the WBC featherweight belt by stopping Diaz

Linares, 126, Tokyo, Japan, via Barinas, Venezuela, withstood a determined challenge from Diaz, 126, Nezahualcoyotl, Mexico, before stopping him at 2:02 the eighth round. It was a right hand that stretched Diaz out. Referee Laurence Cole (USA) stopped his count midway through when it became obvious Diaz was not getting up in time. There were a few anxious moments as Diaz lay on the canvas when it was over, but fortunately, he is fine.

Proud Mexican Diaz did not win the fight, but he left the ring at the Plaza de Toros with his head held high. He gave it his all and, early in the fight, looked like he might be the man to stick the 22-year-old Linares, 25-0 (16), with his first loss.

In the opening round, a fired-up Diaz, 26, had Linares sagging on the ropes after absorbing a right. Diaz continued to press forward, but gradually things turned in Linares' favor. Linares enjoys a slugfest, but it was excellent lateral movement and a stiff jab that Diaz had the most trouble coping with.

A right uppercut dropped Diaz in the fourth, but Linares elected to box rather than rush in for the finish.

Linares stayed in front, but Diaz hung tough and landed some solid rights in the sixth and seventh. Linares looks like he could be the full package someday if only his spotty defense would improve.

What is undeniable is that Linares can whack. The sudden ending in this fight is evidence of that. In the decisive eighth round, a right stunned Diaz. Linares then stepped back, moved to the side, and fired another one. Diaz, 22-7-2 (9), was in the process of throwing his own right, but Linares' got there first. The final right was game, set, and match rolled into one.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**
Promoters: **Promociones Jose "Pepe" Gomez, Teiken Promotions, DiBella Entertainment, All Star Boxing**
(12-15-07)
Jack Hirsch

Naoki Matsuda No-Contest 8 Rodolfo Lopez

Cancun, Mexico: Forget "Viva Mexico," it should be "Viva WBC" if you happen to be a Mexican who dons the gloves. "Rudy" Lopez was stopped on cuts in eight rounds by Japan's Matsuda in a WBC featherweight title eliminator, but escaped with a no-contest rather than a loss after WBC President Jose Sulaiman had his say.

Lopez suffered a small cut over his left eye in the third round that had worsened by the fifth. Referee Laurence Cole (USA) appeared to make the right call when he ruled the cut was the result of a punch. And by the end of the eighth, it was so severe that Lopez was not allowed to come out for the ninth.

Matsuda and his countrymen celebrated wildly when the ring announcer declared him the winner. Lopez then

rushed across the ring and hit him in the back. The Mexico-based WBC sucker-punched Matsuda a lot harder. They called upon a brand-new rule that states if a cut was caused by a punch but later made worse by a butt, it's the same as if a butt caused the cut initially. In other words, you go to the scorecards (which, in this case, had Lopez slightly ahead). The problem was, ref Cole never ruled that the cut was worsened by headbutts, and there was no proof that it was. Cole just went ahead and used the rules that everyone but the WBC recognizes, allowing Matsuda to leave the ring believing he had won.

But later, Sulaiman declared the fight a no-contest. He noted that the WBC could have declared Lopez the winner, but because they didn't want to be perceived as showing partiality to a Mexican, they settled on the no-contest ruling and ordered the men to fight again. Sulaiman is a real sweetheart, isn't he?

Both worked the body over the first four sessions and it got a little dirty at times. Lopez seemed hesitant to exchange, which was understandable. This was a rematch of a fight earlier in the year when Matsuda knocked him out in five.

Matsuda, 125¾, started to land his right regularly in the fifth, which was probably the reason the cut worsened as it did. Lopez, 125¾, a former WBC featherweight beltholder, realized how bad the cut was and upped his efforts accordingly. He hurt Matsuda in the sixth. Then in the seventh and eighth, they exchanged freely, perhaps realizing the end was near.

Matsuda, 29-7-3 (12), and Lopez, 20-5-1 (14), will now box for a third time. And it's fair to presume they'll keep fighting each other until the WBC gets the result it craves.

About a week after the fight, Lopez, 24, put out a press release apologizing to Matsuda, 31, for his unsportsmanlike postfight conduct. Matsuda deserves a bigger apology, from those who ambushed him and took away a victory that was rightfully his.

Television: **Pay-Per-View**

Promoters: **Promociones Jose "Pepe" Gomez, Teiken Promotions, DiBella Entertainment, All Star Boxing**

(12-15-07)

Jack Hirsch

Solis stays busy with a kayo of Batawang

Ulises Solis KO 9 Bert Batawang

Guadalajara, Mexico: One of boxing's busiest titlists, Solis made his sixth defense of the IBF light flyweight belt and his fourth of 2007 with a dominant win over mediocre veteran Batawang at the Benito Juarez Auditorium in Solis' hometown. This was probably the softest opponent of Solis' reign, but hopefully it will lead to something more meaningful, such as a bout with RING champ Ivan Calderon or fellow beltholder Edgar Sosa.

Solis, 107½, was in complete control for the first three rounds, but hit a rough spot in the fourth when southpaw Batawang, 107¼, Cebu City, Philippines, appeared to rock "Archie" momentarily with a flush shot. The 26-year-old Solis bounced right back, however, and managed to win the round on all three scorecards, and in the fifth, he hurt Batawang, 36, with a bodyshot.

The fight became increasingly one-sided, with Batawang struggling with a cut on his right eyebrow, until finally, at 2:33 of the ninth, Solis battered Batawang, 50-7 (34), with a combination and referee Pat Russell (USA) halted the carnage. All three judges, David Robertson (USA), Oldemar Soto (Panama), and Rafael Lopez Santos (Mexico), had Solis, 26-1-2 (20), pitching a shutout.

Promoter: **Promociones Zanfer**

(12-15-07)

Glen Johnson KO 8 Hugo Pineda

Atlantic, New Jersey: Johnson entered this off-TV fight against Pineda at the Ballroom at Bally's Hotel and Casino with a simple goal in mind: Get the journeyman out of there. The former world light heavyweight champ knew that if he won without incident or injury, a big fight against WBC titlist Chad Dawson awaited, so Johnson took care of business just as he was expected to.

This marked only the fourth time the 36-year-old Pineda, 177, Barranquilla, Colombia, had fought since 2003, and the first time since 2006. But Johnson, 174,

PHOTO BY ED MULHOLLAND/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Johnson tunes up for Dawson by stopping Pineda

Miami, Florida, wasn't about to ease up on account of Pineda's inactivity.

Johnson, 47-11-2 (32), was slightly perplexed by Pineda's southpaw style at the outset. The Colombian used lateral movement to create openings, pecking away and running from "The Road Warrior." But Johnson, 39, began finding his range in the second round with his jab, and by the fourth round, he was putting heavy pressure on Pineda, 39-4-1 (28).

Johnson worked the body and head, and late in the seventh, he landed a left hook to the body that dropped Pineda. Johnson began in the eighth where he had left off in the seventh, hitting Pineda at will, working both upstairs and down. Johnson had Pineda reeling when referee David Fields (USA) had seen enough and called a halt at the 0:49 mark.

Afterward, Johnson got his reward, an April 12 date against Dawson in Tampa, Florida.

"I felt great," said Johnson, who was coming off a minor hiatus himself, fighting for the first time in six months. "Pineda was moving and running a lot, but I kept catching him with the jab and cutting off the ring. Once I started hitting him, he'd get on his bicycle and I went back to the jab. He used a lot of survival tactics."

What threw Johnson off were Pineda's wild, looping punches.

"I had to be aware of that," said Johnson, who is now 8-1 against southpaws. "I had to finish Pineda, I had to get him out. I knew if I did, they'd give me Dawson. I'm truly looking forward to facing Dawson. I'm 39 years old going on 23. I have the whole light heavyweight division running from me."

Promoter: **DiBella Entertainment**

(1-5-08)

Joe Santoliquito

Danny Green W 12 Stipe Drews

***Perth, Australia*:** Green was originally intended as Antonio Tarver's opponent on December 1 on Showtime, but when contract negotiations stalled, the Australian enticed new WBA light heavyweight titlist Stipe Drews to his hometown for the Western Australian city's first title fight.

The 34-year-old Drews, 174½, Pula, Croatia, was attempting his first defense after winning the lightly regarded belt from Silvio Branco on April 28. The 6'5" southpaw had a four-inch height and a huge reach advantage over Green, but he did not use them. He was content to circle left and right, away from Green. All of his movement could not save him from being hurt by a left hook to the chin in round one.

A left hook and two right hands at the end of round two saw Drews' legs wobble ever so slightly. Green, 174½, was pressuring constantly, and when he did land, it encouraged Drews to move even more on the outside. After only two rounds, Drews knew if he stood and traded he was going to be hurt, so he used his long legs. It was reminiscent at times of Frenchman Morrade Hakkar's running performance against Bernard Hopkins in March 2003. When he did punch, Drews was only feeling with his right jab without committing to it. When he wasn't moving, Drews was wrestling on the inside, both boxers crashing through the ropes at the beginning of round three.

A left hook early in round five hurt Drews; blood trickled from his nose, and he was forced to hold on. In the final minute of round six, Drews was continuously circling without punching, and referee Takeshi Shimakawa (Japan) stopped the action and motioned with his hands that Drews had to fight.

Even at the beginning of round seven, when he was clearly behind on points, Drews showed little interest in upping his offensive work rate. He was warned for holding in round eight, and the 6,000-strong capacity crowd at the Challenge Stadium tired of his tactics, booed loudly.

With Green, 34, not tiring and working forward with his potent punches, Drews, 32-2 (13), seemed to accept his fate well before the end of the match, his only goal being to walk out of the ring at the final bell. Even when Drews made Green miss, he made no effort to counter. With his pregnant wife, Nina, cheering at ringside, Green, 25-3 (22), spent most of the final round shadowboxing and feinting, taking no risks at all.

This was a different Green than the one who lost his rematch with German Markus Beyer and fell to fellow Aussie Anthony Mundine on points. It was a stronger Green who had not been forced to make the super middleweight limit through his own stubbornness to starve himself.

All three judges scored the fight for Green, Jean-Louis Legland (France) 118-111, Tom Miller (USA) 118-

110, and Levi Martinez (USA) 120-108.

"I promised a long time ago to bring the world title to Perth," said Green. "I promised I would be world champion and I promised I would win it in my own backyard. I have been robbed in Germany. I have been destroyed about my performance in big fights. It doesn't get any better than this, until my new baby comes."

Promoter: **Green Machine Promotions**

(12-16-07)

Paul Upham

Steve Cunningham KO 12 Marco Huck

Bielefeld, Germany: Stepping into the lion's den held no fear for Cunningham, 192¾, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, not after two consecutive European expeditions in which valuable lessons had been learned. In November 2006, he felt cheated after finding himself on the wrong end of a split decision that went to Poland's Krzysztof Wlodarczyk for the vacant IBF cruiserweight title. Six months later, he upped his game and came away, deservedly, with a majority points victory against the Pole to win the title.

So when he put his belt on the line for the first time at Seidensticker Halle against the unbeaten Huck, 198½, Bielefeld, Germany, he knew what would be required. He was made to dig deep by his aggressive German challenger, a former world kickboxing champion, but the challenger's inexperience at this level undermined his determined effort and Cunningham did what was necessary to avoid any possibility of a controversial points loss.

Huck, 19-1 (14), made an assertive start, coming in aggressively and catching Cunningham with several solid punches to the head, lefts and rights. He continued to charge forward in the second round, but his work became wild and Cunningham was able to evade many of his shots.

"Marco didn't stick to the game plan, but tried to knock him out with one punch," promoter Wilfried Sauerland reflected ruefully. "He made Cunningham's life a little too easy."

Cunningham's superior skills and advantages in height and reach also contributed to the way in which he was able to negate Huck's strength and confidence and get on top. When Huck was able to force him back, the Polish fighter produced his best work, but Cunningham was clearly better in center ring, controlling the action with his jab and combination punching.

A hard right uppercut to the German's jaw in the fifth round put a significant dent in his confidence and he did well to avert a crisis at this point, even coming back strongly in the sixth. But Cunningham hurt him again in round seven and blood appeared from the challenger's left ear. Over the following three rounds, Cunningham built smoothly on his lead, and it was apparent that Huck would have to stop him to win.

To his credit, he tried hard to do just this in the 11th round, and his concentrated assault was enough to win the round on the scorecards. But it also left him physically depleted for the final round, and Cunningham staggered him early with a right uppercut. Exhaustion was also setting in on the 23-year-old, and the American sustained his attack until Huck staggered back. Rather than leave him exposed to more damage, trainer Ulli Wegner threw in the towel and Canadian referee Marlon Wright waved it over at 1:56 of the 12th.

After 11 rounds, two judges had Cunningham ahead, 108-101 and 106-103, while the third had Huck leading, 105-104.

"He hit me hard a couple of times, but you have to be able to take those punches," declared Cunningham, 21-1 (11). "I knew I was stronger mentally and physically, and I trained really hard. Huck has no reason to be embarrassed, because he fought a great fight."

Promoters: **Sauerland Promotions, Don King**

(12-29-07)

Brian Doogan

Brahim Asloum W 12 Juan Carlos Reveco

Le Cannet, France: Persistence paid off, finally, for France's gold medalist from the 2000 Olympic Games in Sydney. Having failed twice to capture alphabet titles at flyweight, Asloum, 107½, Bourgoin Jaillieu, France, moved down four pounds and won a deserved unanimous decision over Reveco, 107½, Malargue, Argentina, at La Palestre to seize the WBA light flyweight title. It was Reveco's second defense of the belt that he captured in a vacant title bout against Thailand's Nethra Sasiprapa in June 2007.

Asloum became the first French boxer to win an Olympic gold medal in 64 years, Jean Despeaux and Roger Michelot having achieved the same success at middleweight and light heavyweight, respectively, in the 1936 Games in Berlin.

PHOTO BY VALERY HACHE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Asloum pops a left into Reveco's face

Asloum had been built up as a possible heir to the brilliant Marcel Cerdan and Georges Carpentier, but in a WBA flyweight title fight in December 2005 in Paris against Venezuelan Lorenzo Parra he was widely outpointed and, seemingly, his bubble had burst. In March last year, he dropped another unanimous decision in a WBO flyweight title challenge against Argentina's Omar Narvaez, and his only outing since that setback yielded a ninth-round stoppage of Brazilian journeyman Wellington Vicente.

"But I never gave up on my dream to be a world champion," he declared. "I knew it would be third time lucky when I faced Reveco."

Weight may have played a major part as the Argentine titleholder struggled to get down to the limit. A report in French newspaper *L'Equipe* suggested that Reveco had to shed an astounding 24 pounds in the final six weeks before the fight. If this is true, the Argentine put himself at enormous peril, for dehydration has been a contributing factor to the majority of brain injuries suffered by boxers in title fights.

Asloum, 23-2 (9), demonstrated superior boxing skills and greater power through much of the fight, utilizing his reach advantage to pile up the points before hurting Reveco, 17-1 (8), with a solid right hook in the fifth round. The Argentine's fast hands and prodigious output presented problems for the French challenger, and Asloum appeared to be shaken momentarily in the seventh before he jabbed his way back into control.

Two hard left hooks to the jaw by Asloum, 28, in the penultimate round shook Reveco, and although the 24-year-old Argentine bulled forward throughout the final round, he was caught again by a powerful hook as Asloum consolidated his lead.

Guillermo Perez Pineda (Panama) scored 116-113, Ted Gimza (USA) 115-113, and Venciclav Nikolov (Bulgaria) 116-112, all for Asloum, as did THE RING by 116-113. The referee was Russell Mora (USA).

"I worked hard for seven years and I knew the hard work would bear fruit and that, with perseverance, I would get there," Asloum declared. "I've taken the belt and now there are still many things to be achieved."

Promoter: **Michel Acaries**
(12-8-07)
Brian Doogan

Joshua Clottey W 12 Shamone Alvarez

Las Vegas, Nevada: In an eliminator for a shot at welterweight beltholder Kermit Cintron, Clottey patiently boxed his way to a decision against the light-hitting but strong-chinned Alvarez at the Hard Rock Hotel and Casino. It was the third straight win for Clottey since a December 2006 points loss to Antonio Margarito. A native of Ghana who lives in the Bronx, Clottey is also being mentioned as a potential opponent for Miguel Cotto.

His strength and experience proved to be the difference against the previously unbeaten Alvarez, 145½, who attacked at close range in the early going. Clottey, 146, opened cautiously against the southpaw, whose frequent volleys bounced off Clottey's arms and gloves. Alvarez was having a strong third round until THE RING's eighth-rated welterweight hurt him with a combination in the closing seconds.

Realizing he was too strong for Alvarez, Clottey began opening up in the fourth. Despite being stunned momentarily by a left hook early in the round, Clottey came back with some excellent bodywork and a solid four-punch combo to take the round.

Alvarez, 19-1 (11), bounced back with some nice bodywork of his own early in the fifth, but Clottey, 33-2 (19), caught his opponent with a flush right hand that swung the momentum of the round. Alvarez did his best stuff in the sixth and seventh when he landed the crisper shots, though none of those blows had much of an effect.

Clottey stormed back in the eighth, when he hurt Alvarez with uppercuts and bodyshots, forcing the Atlantic City native to back off. Clottey kept the heat on in the ninth, hurting Alvarez with a hook to the midsection, followed by a hard left uppercut, then a one-two combo to the head late in the round. Alvarez was bleeding from his mouth at the bell.

Clottey, 30, cruised a bit in the final three rounds, at one point dropping his guard and challenging the 31-year-old Alvarez to trade, though he continued to rattle the game Alvarez with right hands. According to CompuBox, Clottey landed 181 of 572 shots, while the busier Alvarez connected on 118 of 867 blows.

C.J. Ross (Nevada) scored it 118-110, Robert Hoyle (Nevada) saw it 116-112, and Chuck Giampa (Nevada) had it 115-113, all for Clottey. THE RING had Clottey ahead, 117-111. The referee was Jay Nady (Nevada).

Television: **Versus**
Promoter: **Top Rank**
(12-20-07)

Anthony Mundine KO 4 Jose Clavero

Sydney, Australia: It was a routine knockout win for Mundine over Clavero at the Sydney Entertainment Centre, a fight that failed to test the former rugby star. The 32-year-old Mundine, 166¼, Sydney, was making his second defense of the WBA super middleweight title, a fairly insignificant belt considering that THE RING world champion Joe Calzaghe has possession of the WBA's "super" champion title. The fight turned out to be every bit as insignificant as the title involved.

"The Man" used his fast hands in round one, and a flurry of right uppercuts snapped the challenger's head skyward. The 32-year-old Clavero, 165¼, Rio Cuarto, Argentina, was punching regularly, but there was little sting to the very few that were landing.

Clavero's left eyelid was cut badly early in round three by a Mundine right hand. After ringside doctor Lou Lewis had inspected the cut between rounds and allowed the fight to continue, Mundine, 29-3 (22), dropped Clavero to the canvas in round four with a right hand to the side of the head. The Argentine attempted to regain his feet but was counted out by referee Raul Caiz Jr. (USA) at the 2:14 minute mark.

While Clavero, 27-6-1 (13), did not deserve to be in the ring with Mundine, having lost four of his previous seven fights, only a few months earlier doctors had told Mundine he was unlikely to ever fight again after losing part of his vision via an infection in his left eye due to a freak accident with a contact lens. That, coupled with the fact that Mundine had beaten two boxers in THE RING's ratings, Danny Green and Sam Soliman, over the previous 18 months, probably allowed Mundine to get away with such a soft defense on this occasion.

Promoter: **Tony Mundine**

(12-10-07)

Paul Upham

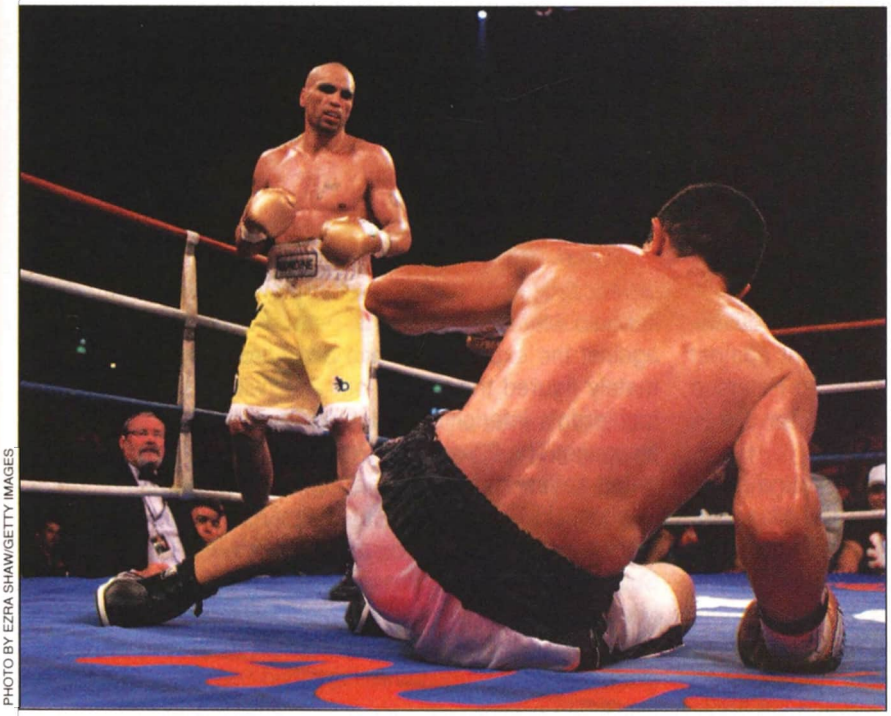


PHOTO BY EZRA SHAW/GETTY IMAGES

Mundine returns with easy kayo of Clavero

Allan Green W 10 Rubin Williams

***Tulsa, Oklahoma*:** Facing his most noteworthy opponent since his March 2007 loss to Edison Miranda, Green methodically jabbed his way to a near-shutout win against Detroit's Williams. Both fighters talked knockout in the days leading up to their just-above-the-super-middleweight-limit meeting, but both proved hesitant to gamble at the Osage Million Dollar Elm Casino.

Green, rated number seven at 168 pounds by THE RING, staggered "Mr. Hollywood" with a combination in the opening seconds of the fourth and scored a knockdown at the end of the ninth. Those were the best moments in an otherwise dull 10-rounder.

The 31-year-old Williams, 169, was coming off a career-long one-year layoff, partially the result of his involvement with the third season of *The Contender*. He started slowly, staying flat-footed on the outside against the taller Green, 168¾, with his gloves high to deflect the Tulsa native's quick jab. Green, 28, landed a straight right off the jab in the final 10 seconds of the opening round that drove Williams into the ropes.

Green, 26-1 (18), was hesitant to unleash his right hand throughout most of the fight, however. He repeatedly looked down at his feet, but Williams, 29-3-1 (16), showed no desire to take advantage of those brief but frequent opportunities.

Williams had his best rounds in the fifth and sixth, when he was able to close the gap a bit and land some to the body. He connected with a decent right to the head with a minute to go in the fifth and got the better of a brief exchange with 35 seconds to go in the sixth, but didn't land anything significant enough to take either round on THE RING's scorecard.

Green went back to dominating mechanically with the jab in the seventh, and opened up a bit with some combinations in the eighth as Williams became less and less willing to mix it up. In the final ticks of the ninth, Green threw his body behind a hard jab. It was enough to floor a flat-footed Williams, who easily beat the count. Rather than go for broke, Williams continued eating jabs and combinations in the 10th, but was never in trouble in the final round.

Oren Shellenberger (USA) scored it 99-89, Jerry Griffin (USA) had it 99-90, and David Sutherland (USA) saw it 98-91, all for Green. THE RING had it 100-89 for Green.

Afterward, Green told the *Tulsa World* that he was suffering from flu-like symptoms. "I could have knocked him out," he said. "We all know I could have knocked him out. But I didn't have any energy. If I was 100 percent, I would have had the energy to dance and run around the ring all night. I could have thrown a hundred punches a round."

It was Green's third straight win since the loss to Miranda, and his second in a row since undergoing a life-threatening procedure to remove 85 percent of his infected colon last July. The referee was Steve Smoger (USA).

Television: **ESPN2**

Promoter: **Holden Promotions**

(1-4-08)

Lamont Peterson W 10 Antonio Mesquita

Biloxi, Mississippi: All along, we've been told that of the two talented Peterson brothers, Lamont is the boxer and Anthony the puncher. But Lamont was beginning to make us question that assessment by scoring three straight knockouts heading into his bout with Mesquita at the Hard Rock Casino. Against the hard-hitting but slow Mesquita, however, we saw a return to form for the elder Peterson, as he sped his way to an easy points win without ever threatening to end the fight early.

It was hard to blame Peterson, 143, Memphis, Tennessee, via Washington, D.C., for his approach, as Mesquita, 142¾, Las Vegas, Nevada, via Cuaruja, Brazil,

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Lamont Peterson jabs at Mesquita

simply couldn't deal with the American's quickness in this battle of unbeatens. A massive fighter for the weight—Mesquita looked like a middleweight in the ring—the 35-year-old Brazilian was not the sort of opponent against whom it made sense to stand still and trade, so Peterson boxed and moved and will have to wait for another day to dazzle and entertain.

The most notable moment of the opening round came when Peterson, 23, landed a right hand and Mesquita slipped to the canvas. Ref Bill Clancy (USA) ruled that poor footing was more to blame than Peterson's punch, and it was a mere 10-9 round.

Early in the second, Mesquita began a pattern of switching to southpaw with no real success, and Peterson controlled the action, mostly with his left jab and left hook. In the third, Peterson lunged in from too far away with a right to the body—except it wasn't too far away against Mesquita, because the South American's lack of speed allowed Peterson to land the punch and get away safely.

The action picked up in the fifth, when a flush counter hook one minute into the round knocked Mesquita off-balance, reeling across the ring, the upper half of his body finally pitching forward through the ropes. It could have been ruled a knockdown, but Clancy elected not to. Moments later, Clancy showed his consistency in not calling questionable knockdowns, ruling a slip when Mesquita landed a punch, the fighters' feet tangled, and Peterson needed to hold onto the top rope to stay up.

The sixth, seventh, and eighth rounds were all fairly monotonous, with Peterson retaining control without doing anything spectacular. With a decision victory guaranteed, the younger man began coasting in the ninth, doing much more moving than punching. He flat-out gave away round 10, handing the round to a suddenly energetic Mesquita—but Peterson still managed no worse than an even round because Mesquita lost a point for hitting on the break (right after Peterson got away with a shoulder butt).

The final tallies were appropriately lopsided: Larry Ingle (USA) had it 98-93, Raymond White (USA) 99-90, and David Taranto (USA) 100-89. THE RING scored it 98-91.

Clearly, the untested Mesquita is not as fearsome as his now 34-1 (27) record suggests, but scoring a win over an opponent with such glossy numbers to his credit still looks good on the resume of Peterson, 24-0 (11).

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Prize Fight Promotions**
(1-4-08)

Anthony Peterson KO 8 Jose Antonio Izquierdo

Biloxi, Mississippi: In the co-feature to the *ShoBox* broadcast featuring his older brother Lamont's win over Antonio Mesquita, Anthony Peterson struggled in spots against the experienced and awkward Izquierdo, but ultimately figured the Cuban out and, with a little help from Izquierdo's inferior conditioning, produced a spectacular stoppage. The 22-year-old Peterson scored a knockdown in round seven and two in the eighth to force referee Keith Hughes (USA) to call a halt at 2:54 of round eight.

Izquierdo, 135¾, Chihuahua, Mexico, via Pina Del Rio, Cuba, was a good progression opponent for Peterson, 135¾, Memphis, Tennessee, via Washington, D.C. The 30-year-old's record of 16-1-1 (13) entering the fight only told part of the story, as he was reported to have had 388 amateur bouts in the Cuban system.

Izquierdo certainly showed a working knowledge of every trick in the book, fighting in a sneakily dirty manner and causing Peterson to get frustrated and bend the rules himself as early as the second round. On the legal-blows side of things, Peterson rocked Izquierdo late in round one with a sharp left-right-right combination, and scored with an outstanding counter left hook in the second.

Izquierdo outworked Peterson in the third, but nearly all of his shots were blocked, enabling the American to win his third straight round on THE RING'S card. Izquierdo got on the board in the fourth, however, out-throwing Peterson by a huge margin.

Peterson opened the fifth with a solid right-left-left combo. Shortly thereafter, Peterson lost his cool and tossed the irritating Izquierdo to the canvas. It looked partially to be a case of the Cuban flopping to draw a point deduction, and ref Hughes didn't give in, issuing only a warning to Peterson.

The younger man finally began to take over in the sixth, when he pounded Izquierdo with two counter left hooks, mixed in plenty of shots to the body, and generally seemed to be let-

PHOTO BY SCOTT FOSTER/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Anthony Peterson digs a left hook to Izquierdo's ribs

ting his hands go more. One minute into the seventh, a crushing counter hook staggered Izquierdo badly, and a quick followup flurry dropped him to his knees for a four-count. Izquierdo got up mostly clear-headed, but looked completely gassed, and Peterson pounced, scoring with a big right-left and then driving his opponent across the ring with two right hands. Impressively, Izquierdo stayed on his feet and survived the round, even throwing back a little bit during the final minute.

Peterson, 26-0 (19), began the eighth round by dancing energetically on his toes, effectively telling Izquierdo, "You're exhausted and I could go another 20 rounds, so don't get any ideas about making a comeback." Peterson backed Izquierdo into a corner with a left, a right, and another left, and then a huge left to the temple hurt the Cuban. A flurry along the ropes dropped him, and he got up at the count of eight. Izquierdo held on to Peterson to survive, and he did it so excessively that Hughes took a point from him with 30 seconds left in the round. It was academic, of course. A left-right-left combo moments later floored Izquierdo, and the ref counted to eight before waving it off with the beaten man still on his knees.

Television: **Showtime**
Promoter: **Prize Fight Promotions**
(1-4-08)

Alex Arthur W 12 Steve Foster

Edinburgh, Scotland: As a statement of how he might fare against the elite in the junior lightweight division, this was far from convincing, but Arthur, 130, Edinburgh, Scotland, did offer up his faithful supporters at the Meadowbank Arena a pulsating fight. Foster, 129½, Salford, England, performed better and enjoyed more success than many observers had anticipated and the atmosphere generated by 4,000 fans was electric.

With Joan Guzman expected to relinquish the WBO super featherweight title rather than confront Arthur, the 29-year-old Scot will soon be awarded the belt, having come into this bout as "interim titleholder." Foster's only previous defeat had come against Derry Matthews in October 2006, but the 27-year-old had never faced another boxer in THE RING'S top 10. Arthur is rated seventh.

Foster took the fight to Arthur from the outset, outworking his opponent throughout the opening three rounds to establish a clear lead. But the local fighter reacted well, working the body with hard hooks and, belatedly, gaining a more productive rhythm with his jab. The bigger punches were still being landed by Foster, 23-2-1 (16), who used his head as an alternative weapon for good measure whenever he could get away with it.

Arthur, 26-1 (19), gained greater control of the exchanges the longer the fight went on, and in the ninth round he landed a sickening right to the body that forced Foster to take a knee as English referee Terry O'Connor issued a mandatory eight-count. This might have signaled a telling turn in the fight, but Foster, cheered on by world junior welterweight champion Ricky Hatton at ringside, rallied magnificently.

With an explosive overhand right, Foster sent Arthur crashing through the ropes in the 11th round, and the Scot was in serious trouble. He used his guile to survive Foster's followup assault and managed to steer clear of further trouble in the 12th round, when he was very relieved to hear the final bell.

Dave Parris (England) and Roy Francis (England) scored 114-111, while Paul Thomas (England) had it 113-112, all for Arthur, as did THE RING by 114-112.

"When I dropped him with the bodyshot in the ninth, I thought it was all over," Arthur reflected. "I really took my foot off the gas—what an idiot. I should have pushed on and landed a few more bodyshots, but I let it drag, dropped my hands, and I got nailed."

Luckily, he suffered a less painful fate than on the night he got stopped by Manchester's Michael Gomez in an even more electrifying slugfest, but this was much harder for Arthur than it ought to have been.

Promoter: **Sports Network**
(12-15-07)

Brian Doogan ■

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5911/10-07

New Faces

(Continued from Page 28)

DeJesus with a sizzling right cross in the first round. Gamboa then tried too hard to end the fight and ultimately let DeJesus back into the contest. Still, Gamboa pressured the veteran continually, fighting with an urgency that suggested he was behind on the scorecards, which he clearly wasn't. He finally stopped DeJesus in the sixth round. The bout took place in South Florida before a largely Cuban-American crowd.

"I felt the warmth of the pro-Cuban crowd," said Gamboa. "It was not as much as when I used to fight in Cuba, but it was very close. It was an honor for me to fight in front of that crowd."

"He has unbelievable power in both hands," said Oner, who has traveled to the United States for both of Gamboa's fights here. "He's fought very tough guys. We never give him a bum. He's fought real opponents."

The philosophy behind Oner's approach is rooted in the Cuban system of developing Olympic champions. It has often been said that the toughest fights the Cubans encounter are in the gyms on the island. The competition to make the Olympic team is so fierce that the fighters push each other to new levels. Oner and Gonzalez believe the best way to further develop Gamboa's talent is to not pad his record against inferior opposition.

That led to a January 5 date on the undercard of the Paulie Malignaggi-Herman Ngoudjo fight in Atlantic City. The original opponent was supposed to be former WBA featherweight titleholder Freddie Norwood, but Norwood didn't want the fight on short notice. Therefore, they had to settle for Gilberto Luque, 7-4-2 (3), who was dropped with a vicious left hook and was felled twice more before the referee stopped it at 1:54 of the first round. When it was over, Gamboa shrugged, as if to say, "What did you expect?"

"When I called Gamboa's fight with Adailton DeJesus, I was blown away—and that's *after* having seen all

of the Cuban's previous fights on tape," said Steve Farhood, analyst for *ShoBox*. "His speed and timing are exceptional, but what was most impressive was his presence and attitude. He knows he's good, and you can tell that, in his mind, the other guy doesn't have a chance; knocking him out is a mere formality. You don't see this kind of arrogance from too many prospects. The last fighter with less than 10 bouts that I remember carrying himself this way was Joan Guzman, and his career has turned out pretty damn well."

There is surely something to a fighter who impresses people just by the sound of his punches. Gamboa's blows thud with the kind of impact one would normally hear when a fighter is teeing off on a heavybag. By the time he entered the ring in Atlantic City, Malignaggi was holding court with reporters at ringside, but then one media member glanced up at the ring after hearing Gamboa's punches.

"He's lightning quick," said Gonzalez. "He has power in either hand and he has a great chin. He doesn't get hit that much, but when he does, he can take the shot."

But he does get hit and that is the most glaring weakness in his game. When Gamboa moves his hands, he moves them furiously. That is how he got the nickname "El Ciclon de Guantánamo" ("The Cyclone of Guantánamo"). But his chin is exposed and even a fighter as modest as Luque landed some clean blows. DeJesus was credited with a knockdown, although a review of the fight suggests it was more that their feet were tangled.

In watching Gamboa's approach, there is a Tyson-like how-dare-you-challenge-me-with-such-primitive-skills aura to his demeanor. Yet, outside the ring, Gamboa is soft-spoken and sensitive. During the course of a 30-minute interview, three-year-old Brenda sat on his lap nearly the entire time. After he answered each question, Gamboa would rock forward slightly and gently kiss his daughter on the back of the head. After stepping down from the ring after the Luque fight, he carried Brenda from her seat at ringside back to the dressing room. It is as if he never lets her out of his sight.

And who could blame him? He thought he would never see Brenda and his wife, Dunia, again after he defected. The three fighters had only each other when they finally settled in Hamburg, Germany, after bolting from the Cuban team.

"It was definitely better," said Gamboa of the trio's comradeship in Germany. "More than anything else, I was not alone. Not that I was afraid of anything, but it beats being alone. The solitude would have been a lot harder on me."

Still, there was a vacancy that only family could fill.

"Think about it," said Gonzalez, a Miami-based attorney who was waiting for the fighters in Colombia and facilitated their move to the United States and then Germany. "When you decide to defect and you leave your house for the last time, you are leaving that house and everyone inside of it forever. That's a hard thing to do."

"Not being around those who love you, that's the hardest part," agreed Gamboa.

Some Cuban athletes leave families on the island and simply start new ones. Others, like former Yankees pitcher Jose Contreras, wait as long as five years before seeing their wives and children again. For Gamboa, he was separated from his family for only six months, as Dunia and Brenda also managed to defect.

"It was a big thing for me to be reunited with my family so quickly," said Gamboa. "For that, I thank God. They mean the world to me. I fight for them—and I promise that I will win the world championship for them."

One can only imagine the kind of birthday party Brenda will have when that day comes. ■

Robert Cassidy is a former associate editor of THE RING and a frequent contributor.

DON'T MISS

RING UPDATE WITH WILLIAM DETTLOFF

EVERY MONDAY ... EXCLUSIVELY ON: thering-online.com

Always insightful and often provocative, William Dettloff, *The Ring*'s senior writer, is the thinking-fans' columnist, a writer who never settles for the same old stale commentary you've already read a dozen times. For example, here's Dettloff's take on a handful of hot topics:

The dangers of boxing: "Long after you and I and everyone we know are long gone, men will still be fighting one another with their fists, and sometimes bad things will happen as a result. You may feel guilty about that fact if you wish. I will not."

Nicolay Valuev: "He's hairier than Robin Williams and facially looks an awful lot like Lurch from *The Addams Family*. In today's heavyweight division, that can get you a good long way."

The lack of a dominant heavyweight: "When a heavyweight champ is dominant, the only fun comes in wondering when someone will cut him down to size and how. We rush a guy to the top of the mountain just for the pleasure of watching him get knocked off."

Dettloff on thering-online.com ... The perfect way to answer the week's opening bell!

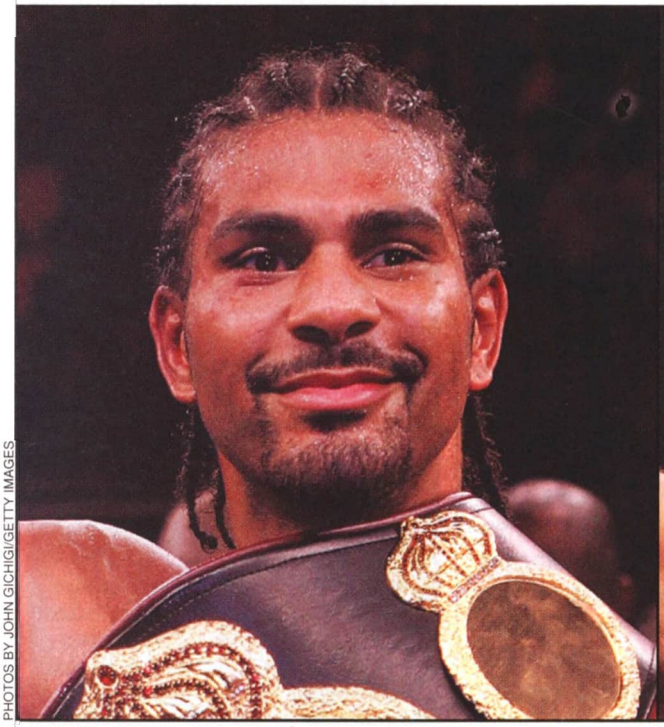
4748/05.06

World Cruiserweight Championship

David Haye

Main Event 12 Rounds

Enzo Maccarinelli



PHOTOS BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

When David Haye announced that he had boxed his last at cruiserweight in the wake of an exciting victory over Frenchman Jean-Marc Mormeck to win the world title, it appeared as if the biggest domestic encounter in British boxing since Nigel Benn's rematch with Chris Eubank would not happen.

But just as former world heavyweight champion Hasim Rahman was being lined up as his first opponent at the higher weight, promoter Frank Warren dangled a big enough carrot in front of Haye, London, England, to make this bout with WBO titleholder Enzo Maccarinelli, Swansea, Wales. With British boxing riding high on the tidal wave of success generated by Joe Calzaghe and Ricky Hatton, in particular, over recent years, this meeting of two punchers has captured the imagination. It is scheduled for March 8 at London's 02 Arena and will be televised in the U.S. by Showtime.

Haye will be the favorite, having stopped Mormeck to win the world title last November in Paris, but he did not look impregnable, suffering a fourth-round knockdown that might have been calamitous if Mormeck had been able to land his right hand flush. Maccarinelli, a noted puncher, is confident that he can do just that. The fight's importance is multiplied by the fact that Haye will certainly move up to heavyweight immediately afterward in his quest to emulate Evander Holyfield as a cruiserweight champion who successfully made the transition. He is also resolved to becoming Britain's first world heavyweight champion since Lennox Lewis.

David Haye

Enzo Maccarinelli

Record and World Rating

Haye en route to world title against Mormeck

PHOTO BY MEHDI FEDOUACH/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

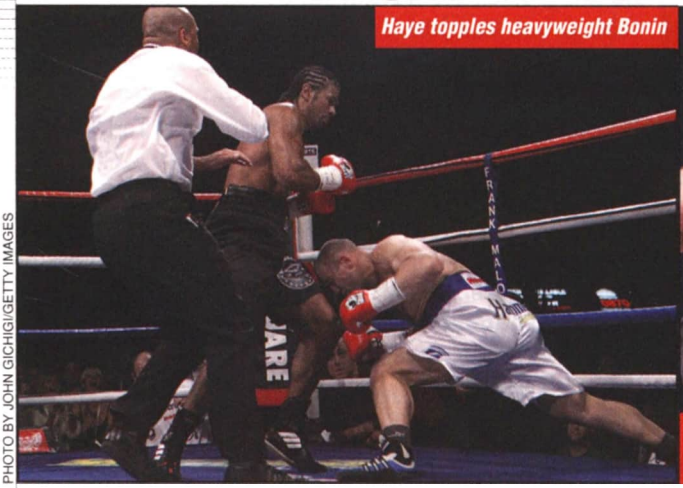
Maccarinelli stops Azzaoui in the fourth round

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Is 20-1 with 19 knockouts ... Turned pro in December 2002 after distinguished amateur career in which he became British ABA heavyweight champion and rose to number two in the world, winning a silver medal at the 2001 world amateur championships in Belfast ... Lost unbeaten pro record when stopped in seventh round in September '04, but regrouped with a series of good wins ... Won the world title in November '07 ... Recognized as world cruiserweight champion by THE RING.

Is 28-1 with 21 knockouts ... Turned pro in February 1999 after losing just four times in almost 50 amateur fights, winning junior titles and two senior titles ... Lost fourth professional fight by third-round knockout, but rededicated himself, putting together string of mostly stoppage wins ... Won WBO 200-pound title in September 2006 ... Has made four successful defenses of alphabet title ... Is rated fifth at cruiserweight by THE RING.

Age and Physical Equipment



Haye topples heavyweight Bonin

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Maccarinelli attack outclassed Bobby Gunn

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Is 27 years old ... Stands 6'3" with 80½-inch reach ... Growing physique makes it major effort to boil down to 200-pound cruiserweight limit ... Sustained bad cut against Giacobbe Fragomeni ... Natural athlete with fast hands and prodigious power ... Question marks regarding chin and stamina, though has passed these tests of late.

Is 27 years old ... Stands 6'4" with 78-inch reach ... Height gives him advantage over most opponents ... Natural cruiserweight ... Chin decent but not made of granite ... Somewhat mechanical and stiff through most of career, but much improved athlete since joining Enzo Calzaghe's stable of fighters, with greater range of flexibility and movement.

David Haye

Enzo Maccarinelli

Best Weapons

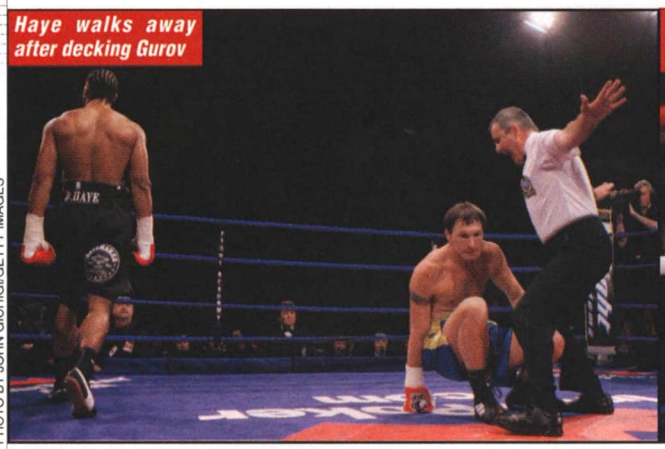
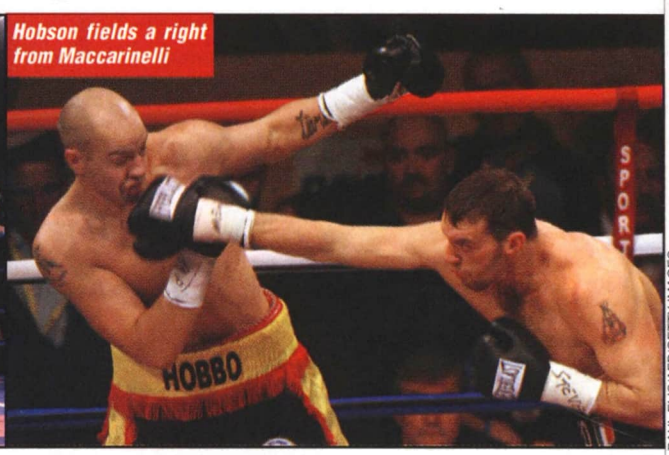

Haye walks away after decking Gurov

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES



Hobson fields a right from Maccarinelli

PAUL ELIS/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

Authentic power in both hands, especially in his right ... Hard and accurate left jab ... Right uppercut is underrated weapon ... Efficient finisher ... Good boxing skills ... Supremely confident.

Powerful puncher, a prodigious left hook his most debilitating punch ... Right hand increasingly a more effective weapon ... Jab is hard and accurate ... Strong starter ... Self-belief a major strength.

Previous Fight

Most significant victory of career, stopping Jean-Marc Mormeck in the seventh round to capture the world cruiserweight championship ... Survived a fourth-round knockdown when Mormeck nailed him with a left hook and followup right to chin ... Remained cool, weathered storm, and re-established boxing skills in fifth and sixth rounds ... Ended fight with solid right uppercut to jaw and overhand right ... Referee Guido Cavallieri issued mandatory eight-count and waved fight over with Mormeck in no position to continue.

Routine fourth-round stoppage of 2000 Olympian Mohamed Azzaoui ... Hard left hook to body hurt Azzaoui in the second and he became noticeably discouraged ... Azzaoui landed several right hands in third, but to no discernible effect ... Azzaoui attacked again in the fourth, backing Maccarinelli to ropes and attempting to land combinations. But Maccarinelli slipped the shots, landed a grazing right hand to head and a left hook to the body, which did not appear enough to finish fight, but Azzaoui was counted out at 0:58 of fourth.

Quality of Opposition

Faced former IBF cruiserweight titleholder Arthur Williams in only 10th pro fight (KO 3) ... Faded alarmingly against old warhorse Carl Thompson in next outing (KO by 5) ... Rebounded to win European title against heavy-hitting Ukrainian Alexander Gurov (KO 1) and defended title against unbeaten Dane Lasse Johansen (KO 8) and unbeaten Italian Fragomeni (KO 9) ... Stepped up to heavyweight to beat Tomasz Bonin (KO 1) ... Also fought variety of journeymen.

In 10th bout faced durable British journeyman Tony Booth (KO 2), whom Haye beat in pro debut (KO 2) ... Stopped Bruce Scott in 2003, four years after London "Lionheart" had gone distance with Johnny Nelson in challenge for WBO cruiserweight title ... Thrilling battle with Mark Hobson, British and Commonwealth champion in 2006 (W 12) and then stopped him in rematch seven months later (KO 1) ... Impressive against former WBC cruiserweight titleholder Wayne Braithwaite in July 2007 (W 12).

Defense

Power and reflexes discourage opponents from mounting sustained offense ... Carries left hand dangerously low, leaving himself vulnerable to right hand, the punch with which Mormeck hurt and floored him ... Also faced referee's count against African super middleweight Lolenga Mock, who stunned him with overhand right.

Has improved this part of his game under the supervision of Enzo Calzaghe and in regular sparring sessions with world super middleweight champion Joe Calzaghe ... Can get caught against the ropes, leaving him vulnerable ... Stopped by Lee Swaby, but had been pro for less than a year.

David Haye

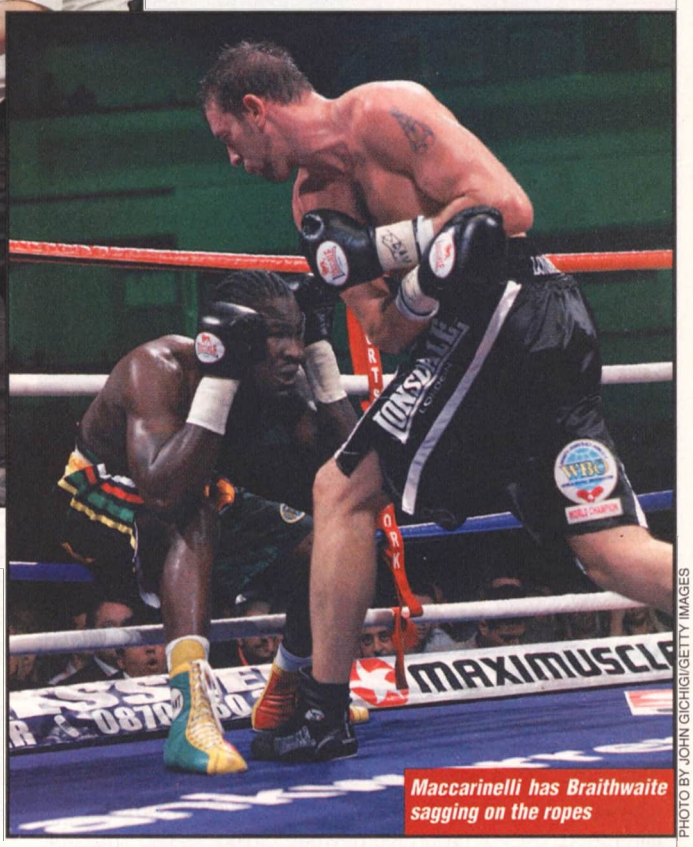
Enzo Maccarinelli

Style

Bloody Haye blasts out Fragomeni

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Boxer-puncher, achieving best results when utilizing jab ... Solid bodypuncher, as proved against Mormeck, digging in hard hooks that caused the Frenchman to lower his defenses ... Aggressively looks for openings to land knockout punch.



Maccarinelli has Braithwaite sagging on the ropes

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Good boxer with sound fundamentals, solid jab, and dynamite in his fists, particularly the left hook ... Patient in probing for openings ... Less methodical and wooden in recent fights ... Proven finisher.

The Questions

Admits to being weak at the weight, so has he made a mistake by taking one more bout at cruiserweight before stepping up to heavyweight? Will his chin and stamina problems come back to haunt him? Has boxed beyond five rounds only four times and been 12 rounds only once, so if he fails to end the fight early, can he sustain effort through grueling 12-rounder? Can he take Maccarinelli's punch? Was Mormeck on the wane?

Can he step up to the plate against the most accomplished opponent of his career? Has conservative matchmaking exaggerated his potential? Will he be able to take Haye's best punch? Does he have the nerve and know-how to survive if he is hurt? Has been beyond five rounds five times and gone 12 rounds on three occasions, so will he have the edge the longer the fight goes?

The Outcome

It could be explosive from the outset, with two big punchers determined to prevail in this domestic grudge match. Maccarinelli will surprise Haye with his speed, but Haye's greater array of punches will give him an edge. Open to the right hand, Haye may go down, but he will rise and stop Maccarinelli—and then move up to heavyweight.

May 1988

COVER STORY: "George Foreman: 'I Can Beat Mike Tyson'" by Las Vegas correspondent Jack Welsh was written shortly after Big George racked up the seventh straight victory of his legendary comeback, a fifth-round TKO of Italian journeyman Guido Trane. The 244-pound Foreman had shed 23 pounds since his first comeback bout and was feeling mighty frisky.

"I feel I can beat Tyson," he insisted. "You have to admit that Tyson's mean. But if I get a chance to fight him, I'd make him run as soon as the bell rung. I'd have him going side to side. You'll see another Sugar Ray Leonard out there ... and it will be Tyson. I'd make him run."

"We are not giving George Foreman any credibility at the moment," said Bill Cayton, Tyson's co-manager. "However, if he beats one of the top five contenders, we'd definitely give him consideration in the future."

Unfortunately, the Foreman-Tyson dream match never materialized, and by the time Foreman knocked out Michael Moorer in November 1994 to regain the heavyweight title, Iron Mike was incarcerated.

"The Tyson Juggernaut Rolls On: Showdown With Spinks Set For June" by Nigel Collins covers Tyson fourth-round knockout of former champion Larry Holmes at Atlantic City's Convention and sets the stage for Tyson showdown with linear champion Michael Spinks.

"For the majority of the almost 17,000 in attendance, the finale was exactly what they'd come to see—another Tyson demolition job," wrote Collins. "But for those of us who remember Holmes in his glory years, it was sad sight to behold. Holmes had never been the most lovable of champs, but he'd earned respect by beating the best, even if he sometimes had to come off the canvas to do so.

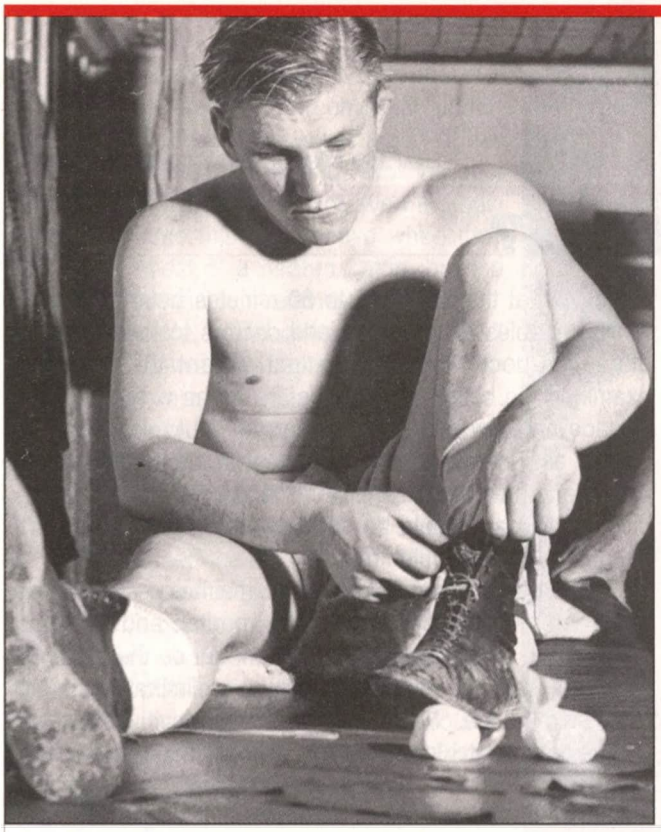
"Tyson was much kinder after the bout than during it. He praised Holmes' courage and said he didn't think he could have beaten Larry during his prime. Of course, that's something we'll never know, as Holmes was showing signs of decay even before Spinks ended his undefeated streak."

Tyson squeezed in a quick kayo of Tony Tubbs in Japan before fighting Spinks, and then unified the heavyweight title

Tyson flattens Holmes in fourth round

World Champions

(*for the period ended February 4, 1988*)
Heavyweight: Michael Spinks
Light Heavyweight: vacant
Middleweight: vacant
Welterweight: Jorge Vaca
Lightweight: vacant
Featherweight: Antonio Esparragoza
Bantamweight: vacant
Flyweight: Sot Chitalada



Even though he couldn't punch, Farr was fun to watch

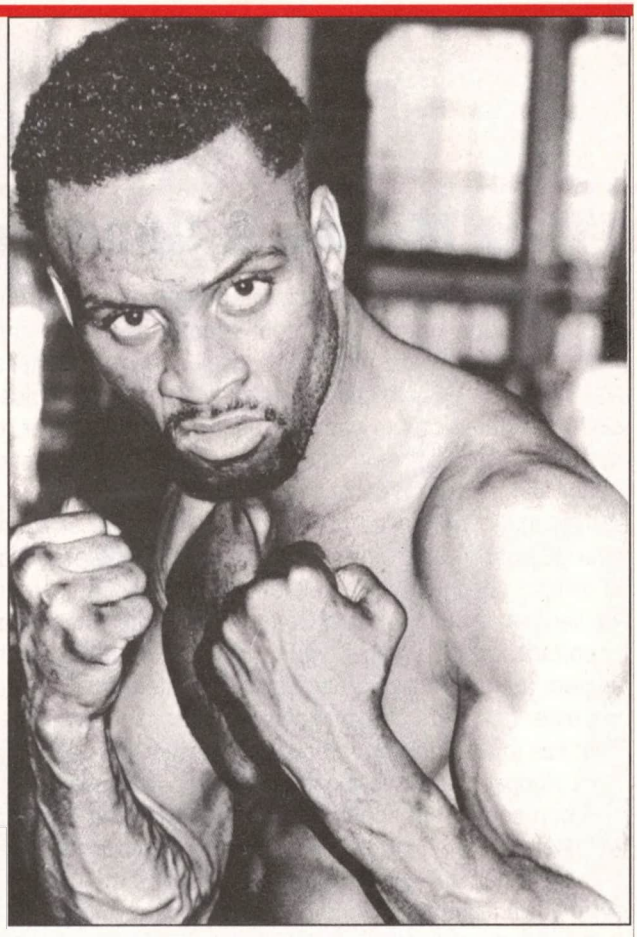
with a first-round knockout in the same building he'd stopped Holmes five months earlier.

"Sign Of The Times" by Argentine correspondent Carlos Irusta bemoans the closing of the famous Luna Park Gym in Buenos Aires.

"Is boxing dying in Argentina?" asked Irusta. "Once a hotbed of fistic activity, Argentina boxing suffered two tremendous blows during the latter part of 1987, which threaten to kayo the sport in a country rich in boxing heritage. First, on October 29, Juan Domingo Roldan was iced in four rounds by Thomas 'Hitman' Hearns in his bid to win the vacant WBC middleweight title. But that was nothing compared to the shock felt throughout the boxing community when Juan Carlos Lectoure closed his famous Luna Park Gym 15 days after Roland's Las Vegas disaster."

Although Argentina has never returned to the glory of the 1960s and '70s, when Carlos Monzon, Nicolino Locche, and Victor Galindez were huge stars, it refuses to die. Currently, there are four Argentinean boxers in THE RING ratings: Hugo Garay (light heavyweight), Jorge Barrios (junior lightweight), Sergio Manuel Medina (junior featherweight), and Omar Narvaez (flyweight).

"No-Knockout Artists" is writer Joseph D'O' Brian's theme piece on boxers who have achieved much despite the lack of a kayo punch. Light punchers from Young Stribling to Emile Griffith to the then-active Michael Nunn are praised as "fighters who couldn't deck a six-year-old girl and who were still a pleasure to watch."



Benn was on a knockout streak in 1988

One of those types was Welsh heavyweight Tommy Farr, who, according to D'O' Brian, "made up for his lack of a punch by being impossible to knock out. He would take another guy's best shots over and over, and each time he would pay the fellow back with a flurry of his own."

"In This Corner" is a column featuring non-combatants, which in this issue is writer/broadcaster Dave Bontempo.

"As a kid, Dave Bontempo fantasized about broadcasting baseball games involving the Mets and hockey games featuring the Rangers," wrote Phill Marder. "As an adult, he instead finds himself dissecting the fine points of a George Foreman comeback or a Terrence Alli decision for a nationwide ESPN television audience. Where did he go wrong?"

While Bontempo no longer covers boxing for the *Atlantic City Press*, as he did when this profile was written, he's still working as a fight broadcaster.

"Rings Around The World" carries fight reports from around the world written by a small army of unpaid correspondents. The "United Kingdom" section in this issue is of particular interests as it features Nigel Benn's 11th and12th pro bouts, a first-round kayo of Ian Chantler and a seventh-round knockout of American Reggie Miller, which writer Ron Olver described as "a good performance against a good opponent in a good fight." ■

The Fight Doctor

By Margaret Goodman, M.D.

What Makes A Good Referee?

There is no tougher job in sports than that of the boxing referee. His split-second decisions can make or break a career as well as save a fighter's life. While it is easy to criticize, few understand the intricacies the referee has to consider during a fight in order to make a correct decision. It requires years of hard work, innate skill, and impeccable judgment.

Nevada's Joe Cortez has officiated hundreds of fights over 30 years. He believes proper preparation is essential to doing a good job. "I like to know the history of a fighter if we can get a hold of it," said Cortez. "The fighter's record is important, especially in a young kid starting out. If both fighters are 5-0, but one has had 10 amateur fights while the other has had 300, you know who has the advantage. That has to enter into your thought process when determining a stoppage or assessing if a fighter is outclassed."

Upon seeing the fighters in the dressing room, Cortez will briefly review their records while giving instructions. He notes, "If they cut easily, I talk to their cornermen and let them know how this will be handled and that I expect them to quickly stop the bleeding or the doctor will get involved."

Arriving at the venue 45 to 60 minutes before the card begins enables the referees and doctors to form a game plan. The doctor has the distinct advantage in having examined the boxers the day before at the weigh-in. As a Nevada ring physician for 11 years, I would seek out the referee assigned to a specific contest at the venue and go over the fighters' medical history, record, and current condition. This data would be correlated to the matchup and the number of scheduled rounds.

East Coast referee Mike Ortega maintains a three-tier approach to preparation: physical, mental, and spiritual. "When I get a fight assignment, I work out on the treadmill and even work with fighters in a gym to eliminate any ring rust," said Ortega. "My mental preparation involves reviewing the rules, watching fight films, and evaluating a fighter's tendencies—do they hold or use rough tactics. Lastly, I meditate or pray in a quiet area before the fight begins. I pray for the safety of the fighters and ask God to give me the strength to make the right decision."

Besides knowing the fighters' experience, it is equally valuable and often lifesaving for the ref to determine the physician's expertise. Cortez, who continues to work numerous overseas fights, always makes time to talk to the ring doctors beforehand, especially if there could be a language barrier. He notes things are not always done by the book and this is where he must take control.

"I want the fighters to have a level playing field, and that means knowing my team players. While in Europe for a major championship fight, I learned a ring doctor had 15 years experience and spoke good English. However, at lunch I saw him seated with the someone from the champion's side. During the fight, the opponent got a minor cut outside an eyebrow. The doc entered the ring and said, 'You have to stop this fight.' I said, 'No, I am not.' He insulted my intelligence. The fight ended in a decision, and the champion won, but he won it fairly."

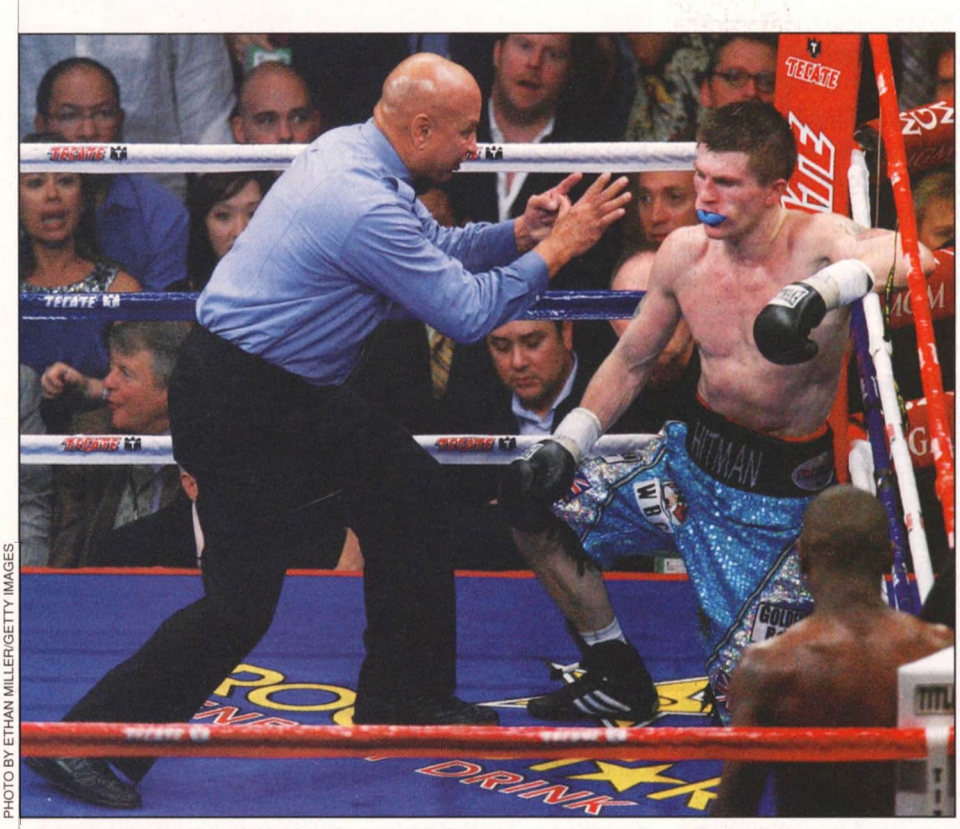


PHOTO BY ETHAN MILLER/GETTY IMAGES

Cortez counts over Ricky Hatton

The flow of the fight will dictate the outcome if the referee and ring physician understand the process. A fight is like a play. It has a beginning, middle, and end, evolving over one round or 12. It is easy for even the best officials to lose this perspective when they are in the midst of a heated battle, but the good ones remain calm and resolute.

For example, while officiating the 1997 Atlantic City welterweight fight between Wilfredo Rivera and Oscar De La Hoya, Cortez brought Rivera, who was behind on the scorecards, to the ring physician to check a cut in the fifth. The doctor, who was new to title bouts, wanted an immediate stoppage. Cortez discussed the cut with him outside the earshot of the television crew, which raised the doctor's comfort level with allowing the fight to continue. Eventually, it was stopped in the eighth, with De La Hoya a decisive TKO victor. If the fight had terminated three rounds earlier, many would have argued that Rivera had not been given a fair chance.

There is sanctity in three-minute rounds with one-minute rest. If the action is stopped or it is necessary for the doctor to evaluate the fighter between rounds, it needs to be done expeditiously or it will affect the outcome, as one fighter will gain an advantage from the rest period.

"I am always careful when I bring in the doctor, as it breaks the momentum, and you don't want to take the advantage away from the fighter who is on his way to stopping his opponent," agreed Ortega.

PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Ortega with Joe Calzaghe following Mikkel Kessler fight in Wales

In regards to a cut, there are three reasons a contest should stop: 1) a fighter cannot see or defend himself, 2) allowing the fight to continue would place the fighter at an unfair disadvantage, 3) the fighter is otherwise losing the fight.

Nevertheless, stopping a fight on any of the above criteria may still seem implausible to the fans. HBO commentator Larry Merchant often stresses the importance of officials demonstrating the reasons behind their actions to those watching. In other words, the referee must sell his call.

If cut, the referee will bring in the doctor *during the round* for several reasons: 1) to reassure the on-lookers he is aware of the injury, 2) the cut may become more of a problem as the fight progresses and he wishes to begin the process in selling an eventual stoppage, 3) he is unsure about the danger of the cut and truly wants a medical opinion, 4) the fighter is otherwise getting beat and the cut will help smooth the way for an uncontested stop.

The doctor visiting the hurt fighter between rounds should then confer with the referee in an effort to prepare the participants and the viewers for an eventual stoppage.

When it comes to a knockdown or a series of hard blows, a good referee must understand the medical aspects. Of course, if a fighter is hurt, the fight stops, but there are countless gray areas. This is where the referee's knowledge of the fighters and utilization of the ring physician comes into play.

Former Nevada ring physician Dr. Flip Homansky believes that too many referees are interested in the angle of the television camera rather than the ability of the fighter to defend himself.

"They second-guess themselves before rendering a decision and wonder how that will play out at the press conference," said Homansky. "A great referee must demonstrate empathy for the competitors, have athletic ability, knowledge of the rules, and ethics. A referee's actions are a natural reflection of his being in charge and comfortable with his ability to do the right thing. A ref who loses his confidence is finished."

With so much involved, it takes a special individual to be a top-notch referee, but when careers and lives are at stake, nothing less than the finest referees should be entrusted with our fighters. ■

By Jim Bagg

A Trip In The Way-Bagg Machine

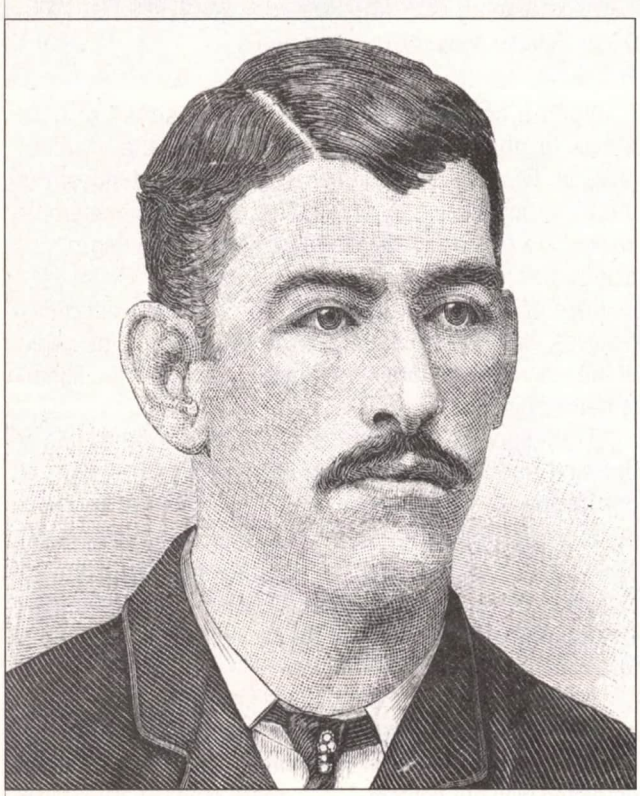
It's been widely opined that boxing enjoyed a comeback year in 2007, and you'll get no argument about that from the Baggabomber. The year 2007 was to boxing as *Pulp Fiction* was to Travolta.

But that doesn't mean we're suddenly back in our *Saturday Night Fever*/*Grease* heyday again.

As someone who lived through the good old days, let the Baggmeister make this much clear: Deez ain't doze. (Don't ask the Baggalini to tell you exactly how old he is, but let's just say that some of the Baggtastic's earliest memories are of him and Methuselah sitting on the couch together, watching John L. Sullivan battle a wooly mammoth.)

What made boxing in the old days better than boxing today? At the risk of sounding like the grumpy old man who used to have to walk to school in four feet of snow uphill in both directions ... almost everything.

Let's start with the obvious: During the Baggosaurus' youth, there was a notable absence of three-letter acronyms. The biggest reason boxing was mainstream then and a fringe sport now is that there used to be eight champs and everyone knew who they were, while today some clods recognize 60 or 70 guys as "world" champs and only an idiot savant (emphasis on the word "idiot") could name them all.



John L. Sullivan: Bagg's boyhood idol

Now, by no means is the Baggadoodle defending Frankie Carbo and the other nefarious characters with whom fighters unfortunately had to "play ball" with if they wanted doors to open. But those mobsters don't look *all* bad in comparison to cretins like Jose Sulaiman. In December, after Japan's Naoki Matsuda scored a TKO win over Mexico's Rudy Lopez in Cancun, not only did that chubby toad Sulaiman overrule the ref's decision and declare the fight a no-contest, but he issued this lovely quote: "We are tired of them unfairly taking away Mexicans' deserved victories, mostly in the country to the north [the U.S.], and we will not allow it to happen in our own homeland." It's one thing for a president of a governing body to play favorites; it's another thing for him to proudly acknowledge that he plays favorites. Maybe David Stern wants to see the Knicks and the Lakers make the NBA finals every year, but he doesn't publicly refer to them as *his* teams. But that's probably because Stern isn't a total jackass. Too bad we can't say the same for Sulaiman.

When you've been watching boxing as long as the Baggapple has, and you remember the pre-alphabet-soup days, there can be no mistaking how much better off the sport was without them. (And no, the WBA, IBF, and WBO aren't really any less despicable than Sulaiman's WBC. Jose's just easier to pick on because he crawls out from under his rock and shoves his face in the spotlight with great regularity.)

And as long as the Baggdaddy's on the subject of those ABC bums, he may as well move into the second reason boxing was better in the old days: 15-round fights.

Yes, we have Jose to thank for the abolition of 15-rounders (though we also must thank all of the sheep who went along with his knee-jerk judgment regarding the dangers of the championship rounds). You'll never be able to convince the Bagginator that those

Sulaiman keeps crawling out from under his rock

extra three rounds weren't vital for determining who was better at the highest levels of the sport. From Sugar Ray Leonard vs. Marvin Hagler, to Felix Trinidad vs. Oscar De La Hoya, to Marco Antonio Barrera vs. Erik Morales (all three fights), to Jermain Taylor vs. Bernard Hopkins (both fights), the results could have been so much more definitive with nine more minutes of competition.

And before you go whining about how much safer it is for the fighters now, tell the Baggdonovitch if it was safer for Yosam Choi, who passed away after *winning* a 12-rounder on Christmas Day. The keys to minimizing the number of ring deaths are to make sure every commission uses proper testing, and to make sure suspended boxers don't slip through the cracks and fight in other jurisdictions while under suspension. Aside from that, you just have to acknowledge that this is a dangerous sport and lives will occasionally be lost. Much like the Baggaloola accepting what finding a shower drain full of hair means about the state of his increasingly chromey dome, this is an unpleasant truth that we as boxing fans don't like to deal with. But it's reality. And there's been no evidence that depriving fans of the last three rounds of a fight has altered that reality.

Moving onto the third problem with boxing today, many in the fight community have complained that too many bouts are on pay-per-view, and while that's certainly true, the problem goes a little bit deeper than that. When was the last time you saw a marquee fight, a fight that the mainstream sports fan had any interest in, that wasn't on a pay-cable network? Okay, maybe *The Contender* fights, which were on ESPN, meant something to the mainstream. But otherwise, every decent fight is on either HBO or Showtime, and the majority of households in the U.S. of A. don't have those channels. *Friday Night Fights* and the Vs. network fights certainly serve a purpose for the hardcore fans, but the reality is that the budgets for those shows simply don't allow them to air meaningful fights. When Chewbagga was a kid, world champions—and remember, there were only eight of 'em—fought on free TV. The Marcianos, the Moores, the Griffiths, the Fullmers, their biggest fights were available in your living room for the cost of a boob tube and some rabbit ears.

But, hey, the Bagglepuss doesn't only present one side of the story. He gives it to you straight, and he must admit, talking about rabbit ears reminds him that some things are better in the here and now. The picture on these HDTVs is just a smidge better than what we used to watch Uncle Miltie on. And when it comes

Florentino Fernandez slugs it out with Gene Fullmer on free TV

to boxing, you haven't lived until you've watched a super-slo-mo replay of a guy's ear contorting opposite to the rest of his body while spit shoots out of his mouth, blood spurts from his nose, and urine soaks his shorts. (Or maybe those are just my shorts.)

Round-card girls are also a welcome addition to the sport. No, they aren't exactly a *new* addition. But when this old fart first started watching the fights, they didn't exist yet (some visionary first came up with the idea in Vegas in the '60s). And, boy, are they useful. Why, just the other day, the Baggadocio was watching a fight when he lost track of what round it was, so he glanced up between rounds and got the information he needed.

Still, for the most part, boxing was better in days of yore. The heavyweights were way better. There were more good American fighters. The top fighters weren't as overpaid and therefore weren't as likely to grow soft and quit when the going got rough. (The Baggster doesn't want to name names, but he's thinking of someone who rhymes with Schmacelino Schmeitas.) Nobody was using steroids, and nobody was entering the ring 20 pounds heavier than they were the day before. And the best fighters fought six, eight, 10, 12 times a year. Not once or twice.

Is boxing on the comeback trail? Most definitely. But the Golden Age has come and gone, and there ain't a trail in the world long enough to lead us back there.

Go, Joe!

You couldn't pay the Baggchefsky enough to be a "press row judge" on a Showtime boxing broadcast. (Well, actually, you could, but since Showtime doesn't pay those guys one red cent, the bottom line is that yours truly ain't ever doing it.) We're writers, we're not judges, and by handing your scores to Showtime every round, you're subjecting yourself to great scrutiny. The first ex-Mrs. Bagg was the queen of scrutiny. And that makes "scrutiny" a four-letter word to the Baggobama.

But to paraphrase the *Diff'rent Strokes* theme song, what might not be right for some, might be right for others. THE RING'S very own Joe Santoliquito chose to serve as a press row judge for the Paulie Malignaggi-Herman Ngoudjo fight in January, and out of six judges at ringside that night (three official ones, three on press row), Joe was the only one who

PHOTO BY MARTY ROSENGARTEN

Ngoudjo takes the fight to Malignaggi

The Monthly Mailbagg

Well, the e-mails poured in this month, full of opinions about Jack and Shane Mosley, Jermain Taylor, the Stingray Award, etc. Just one problem: The e-mails all sucked. Most of them put the Baggicky to sleep, and cleaning drool out of the keyboard is not the ideal way to spend an evening. But there wouldn't be a "Mailbagg" if the Baggman chose not to run a single e-mail, so here's one of the many sucky e-mails for you to enjoy.

I am a regular reader of The Ring magazine and as a result read your column. While you do have some humor in your writings and have a pretty good basic knowledge of the fight game, one thing about your writing is driving me crazy!

It seems like every other sentence has your name "Bagg" somewhere in the word. My God, once an article, maybe twice, you may get a corner-of-the-mouth grin, but jeepers, it seems every sentence has a "Bagg" embedded in selected words. If you think everyone is heading straight to your article to see how you use your last name in the article, you're wrong. It's annoying to the reader to see this over and over again.

Stop it!

K. Wagner

Special K,

First of all, step up to the plate and use your full first name. Who do you think you are, P. Diddy? Or J Russell Peltz?

And second of all, the Baggareeno has no idea what you're talking about. If the Bagg-o-donuts embeds "Bagg" in assorted words, it must be a subtle and subconscious thing, because the Baggpie has never noticed this tendency you're accusing him of. The Bagglesworth will not stand for these Baggusations! Bah, humBagg! Bagg morning, Bagg evening, and Baggnight! Bagg!

really knew what he was watching, correctly scoring the fight a draw. How in the heck *Newark Star-Ledger* writer Franklin McNeil (wasn't he a running back for the Jets in the '80s?) and official judge Al Bennett saw it 117-111 for Malignaggi is beyond the Baggsonville's comprehension. The 115-113s and 116-113s were in the ballpark, at least. But only Joe gave Ngoudjo the credit he deserved for landing the more effective punches in half the rounds.

And on top of that, Joe provided the unintentional entertainment of causing Steve Albert and Al Bernstein to take an awkward pause each time they were about to attempt to pronounce his last name (San-Tih-Lo-Kweeto). All in all, you did a fine job, Joe. You have officially achieved "permission to carry Bagg's jockstrap" status.

And The Stingray Goes To ...

We're splitting the award this month between two fighters who fought on the same card, the December 28 *Friday Night Fights* season premiere in which sub-.500 Louis Sargeant shocked and stopped Darrell Woods, and late-sub journeyman Robert Hawkins dominated former mega-prospect Dominick Guinn.

Sargeant, just 8-11-2 (2) coming in, benefited from the fact that the 40-year-old Woods was all used up, but that doesn't change the fact that Sargeant was meant to be cannon fodder for the respected gatekeeper. He turned out to more closely resemble a cannonball, and he battered Woods until his corner threw in the towel after four rounds.

Hawkins, meanwhile, was there to ease Guinn's rise back into a meaningful heavyweight fight, but despite a record of just 2-7 in his last nine, the stocky Philly fighter came to win, and took about nine of 10 rounds against CompuBox jester Guinn (that is the opposite of being the CompuBox king, right?).

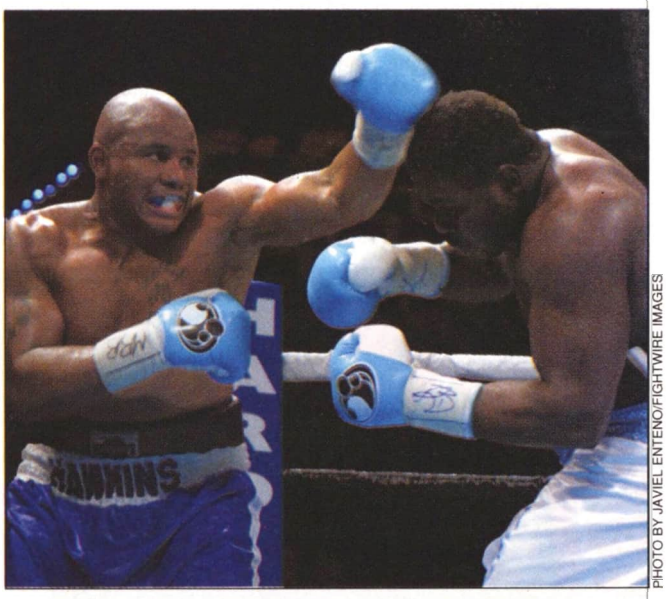


PHOTO BY JAVIEL ENTENO/FIGHTWIRE IMAGES

Stingray winner Hawkins fires a left at Sam Peter

Louis and Robert, the Baggvano isn't sure how you want to go about dividing your Stingray. Maybe one of you gets it during the week, the other gets it on weekends; maybe you just want to saw it in half. That's up to you, guys. The Baggernaut just hands 'em out, and then you Stingmeisters can do with them what you will. ■

Jim Bagg can be reached at Baggmeister@yahoo.com

Come Out Writing

Letters may be edited for reasons of space and clarity. Send your comments to Come Out Writing, THE RING, P.O. Box 1148, Fort Washington, PA 19034.

Or e-mail letters to comeoutwriting@yahoo.com. E-mailed letters will include the writer's e-mail address unless a city and state of origin is provided.

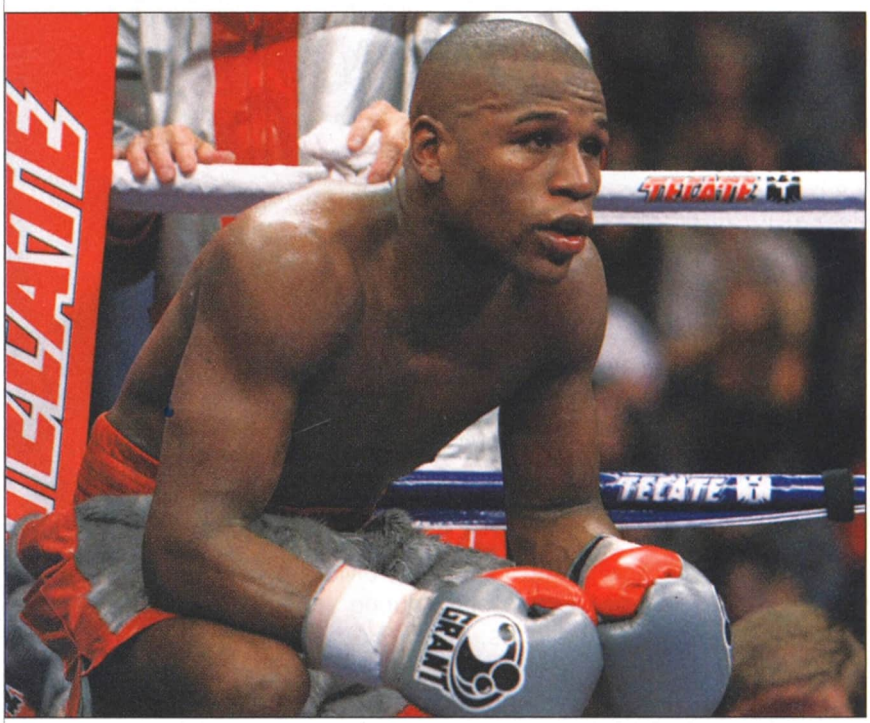
Don't Retire, Floyd

Floyd Mayweather should not retire. Instead, he should fight Miguel Cotto, and after he beats him, which he definitely would, he should fight the number-two pound-for-pound, my countryman, Manny Pacquiao. I know you might think I'm biased, but I believe this will be a great fight. It will be an offense-vs.-defense affair. Mayweather has the best defense there is, but Pacquiao is the only one who has the speed and the offense to shatter Mayweather's defense.

MIKE MENEZ
mike_menez@yahoo.com

I can only pray that Floyd Mayweather will not retire prior to addressing his unfinished business at welterweight. I'll readily confess that I'm running out of reasons not to recognize "Pretty Boy" as number one pound-for-pound. However, if he does not face Miguel Cotto before riding off into the Las Vegas sunset, he can hardly be considered the best of this era, much less of all-time. Cotto would be by far the best boxer-puncher Mayweather will have ever faced, and if he beats Cotto, I'll be forced to concede and crown Floyd king once and for all. Until then, in my mind he's "Money Maybe."

LYNDON ALMS
Houston, TX



It's fine with readers Mike Mendez and Lydon Alms if Floyd Mayweather takes a break between rounds, but both hope that "Pretty Boy" is not serous about retiring. Like many fans, they believe the welterweight champion has unfinished business to take care of before hanging up his gloves.

It Takes Time To Do It Right

Like Will Goddiess ("Come Out Writing," February 2008), I find the numerous championship vacancies in THE RING's rankings frustrating. However, as Nigel Collins wrote in his "Ringside" column in the same issue, THE RING doesn't make fights and doesn't control the fighters in question. As much as we'd all like to recognize a true heavyweight champion, we'll just have to wait until the Wladimir Klitschko-Sam Peter rematch comes about organically. It's much better to have a few championship vacancies than to stoop to the WBC's recent silliness—"interim champion, emeritus champion"—surrounding the Peter-Jameel McCline fight.

MIKE WALDRON
Livingston, MT

Calzaghe Overrated

In the March 2008 issue, THE RING's European correspondent, Brian Doogan, proclaim Joe Calzaghe to be one of the "top three British fighters ever." Furthermore, Doogan states that this is "unchallengeable," which I find bit hyperbolic? Even if Bob Fitzsimmons is taken out of the equation (he was born in England, but was really a

New Zealand export), you still have a formidable list of fighters to consider. Heck, forget England, is Calzaghe even one of the top three ever produced by Wales? Not in my book.

A glance at the records of Jimmy Wilde, Jim Driscoll, and Freddie Welsh show that Calzaghe's ledger absolutely pales in comparison. Do victories over Chris Eubank, Jeff Lacy, Charles Brewer, and Mikkel Kessler even compare to Welsh's victories over world champions such as Abe Attell, Ad Wolgast, and Willie Ritchie? What about his victory over all-time great Jim Driscoll? Or top contenders like Joe Mandot, Joe Rivers, and Charley White? All of these have as much or more credibility than Kessler, Lacy, Brewer, et al. And what about Driscoll (I won't even mention Wilde)? Compare his record with Calzaghe's and tell me what you think.

I'm not trying to knock Joe. He's an excellent fighter and I'm a fan. I hope he keeps going with his winning ways and continues to bring pride to his wonderful country. But why writers continue to knock old-time greats off their pedestals in favor of the new generation long before it's earned is beyond me. Calzaghe has a long way to go before he mentions merit in the same breath as Wilde, Welsh, and Driscoll. It's debatable if he's even in Owen Moran's class.

BRIAN BORU
Chatsworth, CA

Former WBC featherweight titleholder Salvador Sanchez works the speedbag in 1981, the year before he died in an auto accident. Reader John Reeves wrote to find out where THE RING rated Sanchez among the great 126-pounders.

Disputed Decision

There are moments when judges' decision sparks so much shock that one cannot help but be turned off to the sport. We expect judges sitting at ringside to have a clear an unbiased view of the boxers only a few feet away from them. However, the judges representing the IBF for the junior welterweight title fight between Paulie Malignaggi and Herman Ngoudjo were either sleeping (Malignaggi can put a juiced-up hyena to sleep) or thinking about the buffet table at Bally's. Ngoudjo showed up to box, while Malignaggi clutched and grabbed.

DARIO DE GREGORIO
Montreal, QC

Cortez Criticism

After months of build-up and hype, I was delighted that Floyd-Mayweather-Ricky Hatton lived up to the expectations and was a gripping, exciting fight. But I was not happy with referee Joe Cortez, who ruined the fight. He was too involved never gave Hatton a chance to fight his fight and basically forced him to fight Mayweather's outside game. Don't get me wrong: Mayweather clearly deserved the victory and he really showed his class in the ring and proved why he is the best pound-for-pound boxer in this era, but it's a shame when a referee ruins one of boxing's biggest fight in years.

STEPHEN DAY
Dublin, Ireland

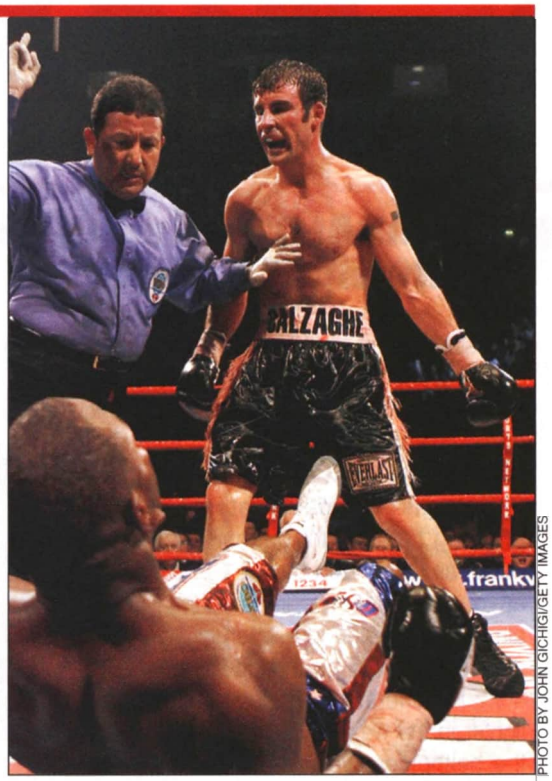


PHOTO BY JOHN GICHIGI/GETTY IMAGES

Is Joe Calzaghe (pictured knocking down Jeff Lacy) overrated by THE RING's European correspondent, Brian Doogan? Reader Brian Boru thinks so, and suggests that Calzaghe might not even be one of the top three fighters produced by Wales.

Rating Sanchez

I just found an old newspaper in the attic with an article headlined "Gomez A 2-1 Pick To Defeat Sanchez." Of course, any boxing fan knows that the late Salvador Sanchez knocked out Wilfredo Gomez. I wish I could have seen more of the outstanding Mexican fighter, as I feel he probably would have beaten Julio Cesar Chavez and others. My question is, how does THE RING rank Sanchez among the great featherweights?

JOHN REEVES
Jreeves1994@aol.com

Editor's note: The January 2002 issue of THE RING contained an article entitled "The 20 Greatest Featherweights Of All-Time" in which Sanchez was rated number seven. ■

Looking Ahead

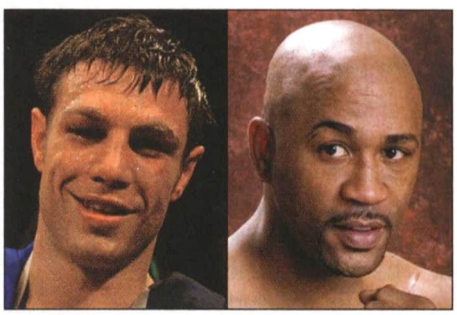
By Eric Raskin

A Light At The End Of The Lightweight Tunnel

Usually when you hear the term "forgotten champion," it's in regard to a long-retired fighter who was done some injustice by the passage of time. Typically, an active fighter can't be a forgotten champion.

Tell that to **Joel Casamayor**.

Though the Cuban veteran is the reigning lightweight champion of the world, as recognized by THE RING and by anyone who follows "linear" titles, he's almost an afterthought when many fans discuss the 135-pound division. **Juan Diaz** is generally regarded as the best fighter in the weight class, **David Diaz** is the beltholder everyone wants to fight, **Michael Katsidis** is the all-action slugger who has bloodthirsty fans buzzing, and **Manny Pacquiao** will become the division's biggest name the moment he moves up from junior lightweight. Casamayor, who had no business winning a decision over **Jose Santa Cruz** in November '07 and who looked every day of his 36 years in the uninspiring contest, is somewhat of an afterthought.



Katsidis challenged Casamayor

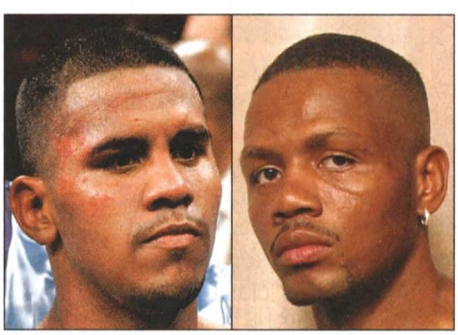
On March 22, in a bout televised by HBO, he'll get a chance—perhaps his last chance—to make people "un-forget" him when he defends the championship against Katsidis.

"I'm going to make this one exciting. I feel like I owe it to the fans," Casamayor said in January. "Katsidis is a guy that comes forward, and you know, I love those guys. He's my height, and I honestly feel like I'm the bigger puncher in this fight."

In other words, expect a totally different version of Casamayor than the one we saw in the Santa Cruz fight.

"Santa Cruz is a tall and lanky guy, hard to hit because he's so awkward. Also, he was my sparring partner for two camps, so he was familiar with my style. But most of all, the yearlong layoff hurt the most, no doubt. People need to understand that when any caliber of fighter doesn't fight for 13 months, they're gonna be rusty. But, hey, all I can say to the doubters is put your money on 'Rocky' if you feel I'm not the same fighter, but don't be surprised if you see the great 'El Cepillo.'"

And don't be surprised if the mess that is the lightweight division gets cleaned up over the course of 2008. Not only is Casamayor facing Katsidis, but also two weeks earlier, on March 8, Juan Diaz will take on **Nate Campbell** (in the HBO co-feature to Oleg Maskaev vs. Sam Peter). Those two fights will obviously provide some clarity. And even greater clarity is likely to follow.



Diaz defends against Campbell

"The concept of the winners fighting has been discussed," said **David Itskowitch**, the COO of Golden Boy Promotions, which handles both Casamayor and Katsidis. "I think there's a good chance that will be their next fight."

Meanwhile, Itskowitch said Santa Cruz, who is also a GBP fighter, will remain in the picture, but probably by going after the belt held by David Diaz—though there's talk of Manny Pacquiao getting a crack at David Diaz first, pending the outcome of Pacquiao vs. **Juan Manuel Marquez** on March 15.

"It's quite a mish-mosh," Itskowitch acknowledged, "but we might get a de facto lightweight tournament, and the cream will rise. Maybe Casamayor beats Katsidis, then he beats Juan Diaz, and Santa Cruz beats David Diaz, and we could eventually end up with a Casamayor-Santa Cruz rematch for all the belts."

No matter who beats whom, as long as the winners are steered toward one another, we won't be left with any "forgotten champions." Instead, we'll end up with one champion whom *everybody* can agree on.

Listen Up

In building toward a possible Pacquiao-David Diaz bout, Diaz will be featured on the Pacquiao-Marquez II pay-per-view undercard (opponent unknown as of press time). Also on the show, **Steven Luevano** defends his featherweight belt against **Terdsak Jandaeng** ... Great news: The world cruiserweight championship fight on March 8 between **David Haye** and **Enzo Macarinelli** has been picked up by Showtime. It will be the American television debut for both fighters ... We mentioned last issue that **Chad Dawson** vs. **Glen Johnson** was a possibility for Showtime in April. Indeed, the excellent crossroads bout is signed for April 12 ... ESPN2 has an interesting fight locked up for the March 28 edition of *Friday Night Fights*, as comebacking **Kassim Ouma** meets *The Contender* Season Two star **Cornelius Bundrage**. Hey, if we couldn't get Ouma vs. **Sergio Mora**, this is a reasonable consolation. ■

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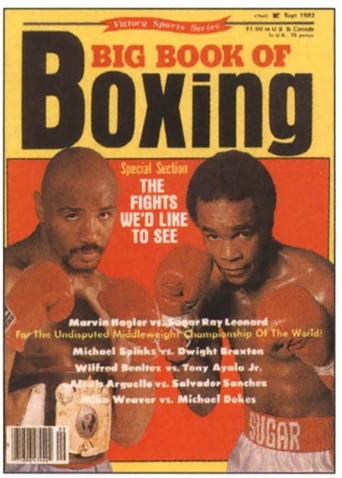

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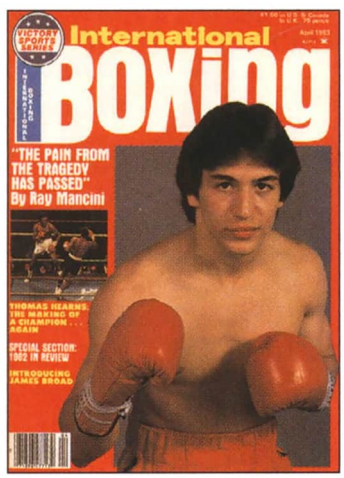

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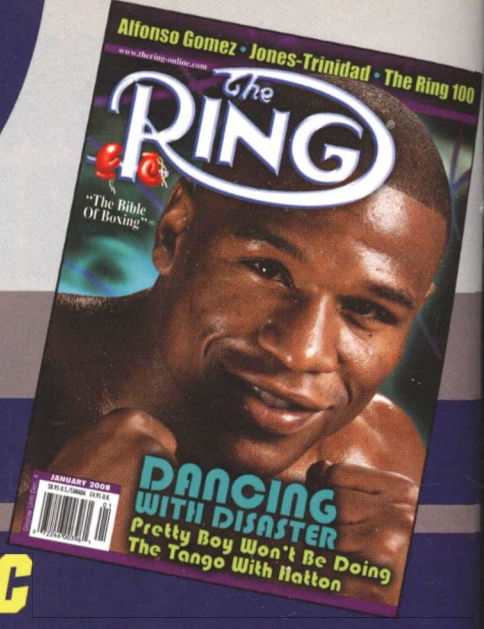

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